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Her hand on his shoulder reminded him

A PIECE OF BREAD

BY DARRELL BATES

THE FIRST thing I saw through the sycamore leaves was the shadow on the water.

It was a Sunday. The papers didn't come until half past ten. I had had my breakfast, the porridge that Mrs. Slater said was good for me, the warm brown eggs that, when Mrs. Slater had gone, I held secretly for a moment or two in a small sensual comfort against my cheek, the toast that left crumbs in bed that I couldn't brush away without bringing on the pain in my leg.

I lay there in bed waiting for the Sunday papers, for the book reviews, the sparse cricket scores of early May before rain stopped play, the notices of London's music and plays and ballet that never somehow seemed to be on when I was there. I lay up against the pillows, my leg rigid under the sheet, watching the river and the sycamore leaves, waiting for the Sunday papers.

The shadow moved slowly, like a trespasser. It moved towards the bridge until it made an angle against the stonework, a sharp bent thing like a bird's wing broken by a careless shot. The substance of the shadow stopped. Perhaps it too had seen the image on the stone. Then it moved again, down towards the water, and I saw it was a girl.

All I could see was a shapeless fawn-coloured mackintosh and brown windswept hair and a pale white face that was just a blur in the distance between the sycamore leaves. She stood for a minute or two watching the water, and then sank into the curve of the river bank awkwardly like a foal settling into grass to sleep.

She watched the river for a long time. Even when she pulled a book from her pocket and laid it open on her knees she went on watching the river. I sat there in bed looking out of the window watching her and waiting for the Sunday papers.

"Mrs. Slater," I said when she brought the papers, "I wonder if you've got a pair of binoculars?"

"Binoculars?" Mrs. Slater always answered a question with a question.

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"Yes," I said. "Binoculars. I like looking at the kingfishers and . . ." It seemed much simpler to lie. The truth, I thought, would only upset her.

"Such a nice quiet gentleman," I had heard her say to someone downstairs, "no trouble at all, poor soul."

"Oh," said Mrs. Slater, "Yes, I think we have. My husband used to have a pair." She looked out of the window. I couldn't tell from her face whether she had seen the girl.

I looked at the girl's face carefully through the binoculars. She had a taut, long, studious face, with high cheekbones and dark serious eyes, set wide apart. Under the shapeless mackintosh she wore a dark-blue sweater, cut square across the neck, and loose faded jeans, and she had no make-up on her face at all. Yet her cheek was a tender, touchable curve of flesh, and her mouth I noticed when the wind moved the sycamore leaves, was well shaped and gentle. She was reading now but still she watched the river—between the pages and the verses. The book, I saw, when she folded it shut on her knees, was a paperback of *Les Fleurs du Mal*.

After lunch I slept. My leg always hurt after lunch, the next pill wasn't due till teatime. When I woke up the girl was still there. On the other side of the river close by the bridge a man was fishing. He was casting carefully, each time into a different part of the current, letting his line run with the stream under the arch and out of sight.

He was a tall thin man with a scar, the binoculars showed me, running in a harsh, ugly line from the corner of his eye to his jaw. He had an angular, ascetic face with a hawklike nose, and the hands that held the fishing-rod were large and big-boned and full of sinew. One could see that all his thoughts and all his senses were concentrated on the fishing.

No one else came; cars went over the bridge now and then, and a bus or two, but no one came to walk or sit on the river bank.

At half past six the girl uncurled herself and stood and stretched in a slow uninhibited movement like a cat. She is trying, I thought, to attract his attention, but the man on the other side of the river didn't even raise his head. He hadn't caught anything, as far as I had seen, all day. At half past seven he wound in his line and turned and walked away and stood under the trees waiting for the evening bus.

I put down the binoculars. I was tired. I had had a busy concentrated day. I shut my eyes and yawned and waited for my supper. Because of this I didn't see the other man come. When I opened my eyes he was already there leaning on the parapet of the bridge over the arch where the fisherman had

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run his line. It was only after I had been watching him for some time in the evening light that I saw he was doing something with his hands. I picked up the binoculars and looked at him.

He was an old man with a very lined and leathery face. He had something in his hands but I couldn't see what it was. He was kneading this something between his palms. I heard Mrs. Slater coming up the stairs and I put down the binoculars and put on my ready-for-supper look. There was cold ham.

When Mrs. Slater had gone, the old man was still there but his hands were lying quietly on the parapet. He stayed for a time looking down into the river and then he too went away.

On Monday the doctor called. He came in the morning while I was watching the near side of the river, waiting for the girl to appear. The doctor didn't arrive until twelve and still the girl hadn't appeared.

"How long do I have to stay in bed, Doctor?"

"Until I tell you to get up." He didn't smile but his eyes under the tired heavy lids were not unfriendly.

"Yes," I said.

"Does that hurt?"

"Yes," I said. He did several other things, prodding and probing and testing the muscles and the movements of my leg.

"And that?"

"No."

"About another week," he said. He looked out of the window at the river. "Have you got enough to read?"

"What do you prescribe?" I asked.

He picked up the binoculars and looked at the magnification. "William Faulkner," he said, "the sentences are so long they will stop you looking out of the window every other minute. These aren't very good. Would you like to borrow mine?"

"Yes," I said, "I would."

"You'll be able to see what kind of fly he's using—" On the other side of the river yesterday's fisherman had arrived—"I'll drop them in here tomorrow."

He turned and went towards the door—he was a big man, he had to stoop. "I'm a birdwatcher too," he added, "when I have the time . . ."

The girl came in the afternoon. The fisherman's line, I saw, was caught in a snag in the stream. He was moving his rod carefully, calculating the strain and, through not wanting to lose the fly and the cast, his concentration was complete. The girl stood there and watched him for a moment or two and then sank in the same awkward coltish movement into her place on

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the bank, and opened her book. When the fisherman had freed his line he looked up, and for the first time he noticed her. He must have seen her there the day before, but now for the first time I thought he was aware of her.

She had changed her clothes: under the mackintosh she wore a light-blue dress and on her head a yellow scarf. I saw the man's mouth move in interest and in pleasure. I was watching his face in the glasses. It wasn't a smile—he didn't look like a man who smiled much. He put up his hand in a tentative salutation.

I moved the glasses quickly to watch the girl. I could tell from her face that she had seen his hand, but she didn't raise her head from her book or return his greeting. The man lowered his hand and looked at it, surprised perhaps by its act of salutation, and went on fishing. He didn't look at the girl after that; he didn't even raise his head when she got up and left.

I saw a kingfisher that evening. I watched him for a long time. I was still looking at him when Mrs. Slater brought my supper. It was cold tongue this time, and tomatoes. I was glad that I had seen a kingfisher, it made me feel better about my lie, about the reason I had given for wanting the binoculars.

It was a very still, clear evening and except for the sound of the river it was very quiet. The sun seemed to flare in brightness before it went down over the Langdale Pikes, as a man rallies in strength sometimes for a moment before he dies, and the light heightened the subtle, delicate differences of shade and texture in the green of the beech leaves and the sycamore and the oak and the larch. It was early May; in a month or two they would have lost their distinctive unfolding singularity, they would have a summer sameness of colour and shape. It was so quiet and still that I heard a clock distantly in Ambleside chime the strokes of eight o'clock.

As I listened I saw the old man walk down the road towards the bridge. He moved slowly, stiff with age, and yet surely, with purpose and with certainty. He went again to the parapet above the farthest arch of the bridge and leaned on it and looked down at the water for a long time. I reached out my hand for the glasses and looked at him, at his lined weather-worn face and his rough country hands against the stone. It was the same man, I saw, who had come to the bridge the evening before.

One of his hands searched in a pocket of his coat and came out with something white. A piece of bread. He kneaded it between the palms of his hands and all the time he watched the water. He opened his hands and looked at what he had made, at the small smooth pellet of bread. His palms closed on it again, and

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kneaded for a full slow minute more. When the bread was the shape and the size and the smoothness he wanted it to be, he cupped his hands under his mouth. I could see the lips pursed as he spat on the ball of bread, moving it in the cup of his hands so that it was wetted evenly on every curve. Then at last he took the ball of bread in one hand and dropped it carefully into the stream.

It was nearly dark when I saw him turn and walk away.

The next day it rained. The fisherman came in the morning, but there was no sign of the girl, and at midday he put his rod away and walked back to the road. I saw him standing under the beech trees waiting for the bus. I had the doctor's glasses now. I could read the lettering on the signpost to Dungeon Ghyl, but I didn't see any kingfisher and there was still no sign of the girl. I lay in bed, and read and dozed and ached.

I tried to place the fisherman, to fit him into some place or pattern that I knew. He had been abroad, I thought. The surfaces of the face and hands had been touched and stiffened by a harsher sun or wind or dust than you got in Westmorland, his eyes had been narrowed and corner-lined by a sharper glare. A geologist, or a forestry man, on leave perhaps after years in Africa, or retired before his time by the wind of change: at a loss now, not knowing what to do or where to go.

He was a serious fisherman. I could tell from the way he fished, from his dull, quiet clothes and the bare economical sufficiency of his tackle. He fished always in the same place, every cast brought the fly on his line to the water underneath the arch of the bridge on the other side of the river. He knew exactly what he was after, a particular pool, I imagined, perhaps a particular fish.

He didn't look a sociable man. He looked as if he fished to be alone. I put his age at forty-five.

The girl, I decided, when I had finished with the man, was about thirty. There were lines of discontent at the corners of her mouth. She worked in a bank or at the public library; she lived with her parents in a back-to-back house in Manchester; her father was a working-man on sixteen pounds a week. I remembered the dark-blue sweater cut square across the neck and the *Fleurs du Mal*. A grammar school it had been, perhaps, for a bright girl at the Eleven-plus, a couple of A-levels, a taste for music, Brahms, it might be, and books, and foreign films. They had all divorced her from her origins, and left her stranded somehow, belonging neither to the world she had come from nor yet to the one she sought. It had been the same, my mind

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imagined, with men. She wasn't the sort of girl that would immediately attract, she would have to seek out whatever it was she wanted for herself . . .

At half past seven Mrs. Slater brought in my supper, and at eight o'clock exactly the old man came down again to the bridge through the slanting, gusted rain.

I couldn't see him clearly in the rain but I could fill in the details now from memory. The watching and the kneading, and the spitting and the careful dropping of the bread into the stream. The time and the action and the place were all the same.

I knew now, I thought, what the serious fisherman wanted, and the needs of the solitary girl. But the old man perplexed me. I couldn't think what his purpose was. There didn't have to be a purpose, of course; but, when you are lying in bed all day watching through a window, you have a lot of time to think, and you easily begin to imagine patterns and purposes where none exist. People are always doing things without knowing why they do them. It is the illusion of the spectator and the listener and the critic that they know the motive. And so I began to imagine the old man's purpose.

Perhaps, I thought, like old people who go into the park every day at teatime to feed the ducks, he is dropping food for a bird that comes into the arch every night to roost or feed its young. I hadn't seen any bird go in, but it could make its entrances and its exits unseen by me from the other side. More likely he was a little touched, an old man who did small regular things for a reason which now he had forgotten or couldn't understand.

The next day at half past eleven the fisherman caught a fish. In the Lake District you are supposed to put them back if they are less than eight inches long, but the fisherman looked at it for some time, holding it at the gills, before he gently disengaged the hook and slid the fish back into the stream. I could see the sorrow and the sadness in his face as he let the small fish go.

The girl must have seen it too. Intent on the fisherman's hands and his face, I hadn't noticed her sitting on the other bank but when I moved the glasses and looked close into her face I saw the small smile on her mouth. The fisherman looked up then and saw her too. He saw her hand come up, the palm towards him. After a moment or two, he moved his own hand in a quick uncertain answering of her greeting. She bent her head into her book then, but it was a long time, I saw, before she turned the page. She had put a ribbon in her hair, and instead of the light blue frock she wore a blouse and a scarlet skirt.

It was a day of sun and showers and shadows and ragged horse-maned clouds. There was a mist on the fells, and dark turbulent

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water in the stream. When the sun shone, in patches of blue, it touched the greens of leaf and grass and the browns of soil and the greys of stone with a magic, sparkling freshness, like the touch of love on a plain girl's face. At three o'clock the fisherman laid his rod in the grass and climbed the bank and walked across the bridge. After lunch he had changed his fly. It looked like a March Brown he was using now—he had got a bite almost at once. Perhaps it was this that had given him the confidence and the joy to walk across the bridge towards the girl. The girl didn't look up but when, leaning on the parapet, he spoke to her, she answered. I couldn't hear what the questions were or the responses but as I watched I imagined them.

"It's a nice day, isn't it?"

"Yes—" She would wait; only when she was certain of the inarticulate shyness of the fisherman, would she add a post-script to prolong the contact—"... in bits."

"Yes. In bits ..." He managed a movement of the mouth that may have been a smile or just a moistening of shy, dry lips. The man looked into the river and the girl looked into her book.

"I'm not much of a fisherman, I'm afraid." His head was turned away to conceal his scar. "I haven't caught many fish."

"I saw you catch one. I saw you put it back." She smiled; his face came round to her smile, and to her admission that she had watched him, like a flower to the sun. "I was glad."

The smile had gone now, the eyes of the fisherman and the girl met for a moment seriously, exposing each's loneliness.

"Well. I must get back ..." The moment was too much for him, he had turned his head away.

"Yes," she said. She looked into her book. After a moment or two he walked away.

Later the old man came. The time and everything he did was just the same as the day before. The fisherman and the girl had gone by then, each their own separate way.

"Are you a fisherman?" I asked the doctor.

"Yes," he said. "I'm a Westmorland man. We all walk, and we all go to Morecambe for our holidays, and we all fish."

"You don't look like a fisherman. You don't look like a patient man."

"You don't have to be patient to be a fisherman. What you need is to know how to fish."

"Is there a lot of skill in it?" I asked.

"Yes," he said. "It's like catching a woman. You have to know the way they work."

"Does any man learn that?"

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"With fish," he answered, "or with women?"

I didn't say anything, and after a bit he went on. "Unlike women, fish are creatures of very regular habits." I knew he was talking about trout. Fish, in the Lake District, usually means trout, or salmon sometimes, or the rare and wily char. "They move according to a regular pattern, and they feed and make love and breed in the same way. If you want to catch a serious trout you have to study the pattern. Haphazard, you will only catch a tiddler, or a grayling."

"It sounds even more complicated," I said, "than women."

"Yes," he said, "it is. Now let's have a look at that leg."

I liked the doctor. I liked Mrs. Slater too. I liked everybody; the fisherman, and the girl, and the old man on the bridge. The only one I didn't like was myself. I had been stupid, stupid enough to go climbing on the fells alone, and break an ankle bone and tear a lot of muscle: and now, lying in bed with the consequences of my stupidity, all I could do was to borrow binoculars on false pretences, and watch other people's fishing and other people's faces through the leaves of the sycamore.

Thursday was a fine day. I thought the early morning too clear and blue and balmy to last, but the sun was still shining when the fisherman came, and it was shining, too, when the girl came across the bridge. I wasn't sure until I used the glasses that it was the same girl. She looked, without her mackintosh, slight and exposed and defenceless, like a creature without its shell. She wore a shirt fitting close over the structure of bones and flesh, and tucked into the brightly coloured skirt to show a pliant thinness of waist that a man, or a prying watcher at a window, or a fisherman perhaps, could encompass with his hands.

She walked slowly, and halfway across the bridge she leaned on the parapet and looked at the water. I thought she had lost courage and would go back to her own place on my side of the river, but in the end she went on and leaned on the parapet again and said, "Good morning," to the fisherman. I couldn't hear what she said but from the way her mouth moved and the way the fisherman raised his hand to her I guessed it was good morning. He must have been thinking during the night—or perhaps it was the effect of the sunny day—but at once he raised his head and replied to her; he didn't even turn the scarred side of his face away.

Later she nodded, it seemed at something else he had said, and walked to the end of the bridge. He put out his hand to help her down the bank; she took it and they sat there a little apart in the short early May grass and the bluebells. After a while

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he went on fishing, still casting carefully into chosen spots of stream and still letting the line run with the current to some special hidden pool in the arch's shadow. She didn't open her book, she just sat and watched.

I turned restlessly in the bed. I could feel the contact between them grow in their silence like the opening of a fig-leaf on a warm, sultry day. The girl lay back in the grass, her head cushioned on her arms; her small pointed breasts were outlined, and the lines of her thighs under her brightly coloured skirt, and her long white-gleaming legs.

The man fished on, but once—perhaps he had touched a fish—he put his hand towards her, blindly, and touched her hair by accident and felt the inward movement of the head against his hand like a trusting dog, or a hungry cat.

After lunch I tried to read *Soldiers' Pay*. I took the doctor seriously; perhaps the long paragraphs would help. But they didn't; even the long paragraphs couldn't keep my eyes away.

They had opened their separate packages of sandwiches and pieces of cake and eaten side by side on the river bank. Afterwards the girl had lain back again in the grass. The man sat, his hands, the fingers spread wide, holding his knees. He turned to answer a question or to put one and then bent slowly, reluctantly almost, to her, like the movement of a slow-motion film. I saw her fingers creep up on his arm, I could see the sun shine on the bent, clasping knuckles of her hand. I couldn't see the meeting of their mouths—his head hid it from my lonely, prurient eyes.

He didn't fish in the afternoon. Once he had sat up abruptly, as if in guilt, and stood and taken up his rod. Perhaps he had a wife at home or he had remembered that he had come to fish. But he didn't cast and soon he laid the rod down again. They lay side by side all through the sunny afternoon. Her hair concealed his face like a cape. I could only see her hands searching—like the fronds of a sea anemone looking for food—on the surfaces of his khaki shirt.

The clouds came up in the evening and shut out the sun. The fisherman and the girl climbed the bank and stood under the trees. When the bus came they each went their separate ways, he to Ambleside and she to some other place. I wondered what sort of future they had planned, or not planned, for the next day and the next . . . The girl walked back over the bridge, and paused once to look down into the river, and then went on out of my sight.

The old man came again at eight o'clock, and again his movements were the same. Again he prepared his offering of bread,

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as if to some secret river god, and dropped it, the place and the time exactly as before, into the river's stream.

In the middle of breakfast on Friday morning, when I had already put the binoculars out on the window-sill, I began to feel ashamed. I was ashamed, thinking about it, that I hadn't felt ashamed before. I picked up the glasses and threw them on to the end of the bed where I couldn't reach them without a lot of pain. I was still reading when the doctor came.

"You can get up tomorrow," he said, "and try your ankle out in the garden."

"Is this your last visit?" I asked.

"Yes. You'd better come in and see me on Monday. Just for a final look. You can come in on the bus."

"You'd better take your glasses," I said. "It was kind of you to let me have them."

He picked them up from the end of the bed and looked through them at the river. The fisherman and the girl were still there. I knew that of course, but even without the glasses I could tell that there was a restraint, a sort of distance between them, as if they couldn't renew the contact of the day before. Or perhaps it was the weather. It was a day with more showers in it than sun.

"Keep them till Monday," the doctor said. "Perhaps tomorrow will be a better day for birds." He put the glasses on the window-sill within my reach. "It may even clear up this evening." He went to the door. "I'll ask Mrs. Slater if she can lend you a stick . . ."

I tried not to look across the river. I put myself in the place of the fisherman. I knew what sort of opinion I would have of a stranger who looked behind the safety of a window and the sycamore tree with a pair of ex-German U-boat binoculars. But putting myself in the place of the fisherman didn't help, it didn't help anything—I imagined those soft searching fingers on the roughness of my shirt.

But today whenever, despite myself, I looked, the man was fishing. He was trying a new method now, he was casting upstream and wider; it looked as if he had put more weight on his line, and perhaps again he was trying a different fly. Three times in the afternoon he hooked a fish, but each was undersize and was returned gently to the river. I used the glasses only to see the length and the colour and the texture of the fish. When I watched, I tried not to look at the girl, at her hands on his shoulder seeking to remind him of her female presence, at her mouth which yesterday he had kissed, which was now pressing questions on him, and chatter, that today he didn't want. Perhaps it was a married man's remorse, or the reluctance of a solitary to

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get involved. Or perhaps it was just that he wanted, more than anything else in the world, to catch a proper fish.

I didn't use the glasses when the old man came again in the evening. I could see without them exactly what he did. I didn't even need to open my eyes. I knew that everything he did and when and where would be just the same. Perhaps he is a little mad, I thought, his mind older even than his stiff limbs.

It was cloudy on Saturday morning, but Mrs. Slater said it would be a lovely day.

"On mornings like this Mr. Slater used to say, 'Let's go to Morecambe. It'll be fine before we get there.' And he always seemed to know." She picked up the breakfast tray. "I've got a stick for you, like the doctor said. Will you be getting up and trying out your leg?"

"No," I said, "not yet. Perhaps this afternoon." She went out of the room, exuding her disappointment and her disapproval. Already the sun was dispersing the morning cloud; it would be a sunny day, the river bank would be dry and warm and quiet.

She was waiting for him at the bus stop, and when the bus had gone they embraced. She had a new ribbon in her hair. The previous day's restraint and awkwardnesses had been thought of, in the night perhaps, and dissected and understood. She moved in his embrace until her back was against a tree.

He fished all through the morning. He caught a fish or two but again they were small, too small to keep. She smiled when he put them back, a smile in which relief for the fish and compassion for the man were gently confused. They were at ease with one another now. She didn't have to prove her presence with touch and talk. It wasn't until they had had their lunch that they moved into a hollow of the bank and lay down together in the grass.

All through the afternoon they lay in the grass; and, all through the afternoon, my previous day's shallow shame exorcised, burnt out by a day of abstinence, I watched them through the glasses.

They lay mouth to mouth, drinking kisses. The man's hand held the head of windswept hair in a knot so that I could see their faces. At first it was only her lips that moved against his, but soon her throat was arched in an urgent upward-straining arc and her mouth was open wide, like a fish seeking to take a baited hook . . .

The sun shone on the unfolding sycamore leaves, and made dancing highlights on the curves and hollows of the river's moving skin. There were swallows on the river now, and blackbirds, on the boughs, singing into the sun.

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"Won't you try and get up now?" Mrs. Slater came into the room and moved to and fro unhappily. "The doctor said . . ."

"Yes," I said, "I'll come down in a minute or two." When she had gone I got up, testing my ankle gingerly on the floor. I left the glasses on the table and walked slowly to the door. It seemed to be all right. I hardly needed the stick. I leaned against the door. After a moment or two I went back and picked up the binoculars and slung them round my neck.

They saw me, of course, as soon as I came into the garden, and drew apart. They lay still. Only the hands touched. I looked the other way, hobbling to the chair that Mrs. Slater had put for me near the river's bank. I saw them later out of the corner of my eye as they walked hand in hand up the other side away from my prying eyes and towards where the willows were, and the thick clumps of hazel, and primroses flowering still and violets in secret places hidden from the sun.

"I'm glad they've gone." After a week in bed I had started to talk to myself. Watching other people's lives through binoculars wasn't the only weakness that had emerged. I suddenly wanted a drink. I wanted a large tankard of beer, and the noise and laughter and the communal smells of a public bar.

"You oughtn't to go out. Not on to the road." Mrs. Slater must have been watching me from the window. *Why can't people mind their own business?* The irritation rose inside me . . .

Why must they look through windows and watch and pry . . . ?

I hobbled back to the chair in the garden. I knew that she was right, it would be stupid to try to walk as far as the pub on the other side of the bridge.

"Yes," I said. "I know."

The old man came again at eight o'clock. It was a clear, still evening again, and once more I could hear the distant chimes of the church in Ambleside. He took out his piece of bread and started to knead it in his hands. He worked at the same speed and with the same careful precision as before. I waited for him to moisten the ball of bread with a spittle before he dropped it in the stream. I waited, and watched . . .

The ball of bread lay there in the palm of his hand. And in the end he dropped it into the stream, at the same time, and in the same way, and in the same place as each day before. Only one thing was different. It now concealed a hook.

I stood up to watch. The old man saw me. He turned his head and his other hand came up and motioned me down. I sat down slowly, and watched.

Attached to the bread now, the bread that had a hook in it, was a trace and a line. Suddenly the line tightened and jerked. He

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let some of the line go through his hand and then held it fast.

He did the same again several times. It was some minutes before he took the line in both hands and started to draw it in. At the end of the line, above the same waters into which the other fisherman had been vainly casting his line for the past six days, was a twelve-inch trout. As he drew it jerking and twisting on the hook, up towards the parapet, I could still see the ball of bread in its throat . . .

" He used to be a well-known fisherman in these parts," Mrs. Slater said. She had come out into the garden and found me there. The old man had gone now and the evening light.

" He's too old now to walk the banks and climb the rocks, and his arms are too stiff to cast a rod. But," she went on, " he likes a bit of fish still on Saturday night. This is his favourite place, there is a deep pool under the arch that he remembers . . ."

" Other people don't seem to be able to catch anything there, do they Mrs. Slater? There's a man been fishing in the same place all through the week and he's not caught . . . anything."

She looked at the river, and the banks of the river on the other side where the willows were and the clumps of hazel. It was some time before she answered, it was as if she was thinking of something else.

" It's getting cold," she said. " You'd best be coming in."

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For Ever and Ever

When trout swim down Great Ormond Street,
And sea-gulls cry above them lightly
And hawthorns heave cold flagstones up
To blossom whitely

Against old walls of houses there,
Gustily shaking out in moonlight
Their country sweetness on sweet air;
And in the sunlight

By the green margin of that water,
Children dip white feet and shout,
Casting nets in the braided water
To catch the trout:

Then I shall hold my breath and die,
Swearing I never loved you; no,
" You were not lovely! " I shall cry,
" I never loved you so! "

CONRAD AIKEN, *Priapus and the Pool*

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SCOBIE BREASLEY'S

Champion jockey, 49-year-old Australian from Wagga-Wagga, unassuming TV-and-slippers family man—Arthur Scobie Breasley talks about how it feels to ride the Derby . . .

Sixth of the seven children of a cattle-drover, Scobie had his first winning ride as a 14-year-old apprentice. Since that day he's ridden over 1,600 winners in this country alone. And in Australia? He forgot to keep count . . .

ALL starts are important, but more so with the Derby. In all races you've got to be in the best possible position all the time. At Epsom there'll be a lot of other horses, and you've got a left-hand course with ups and downs, a stiff hill at the beginning, and then that stiff left-hand hill down into Tattenham Corner, then a sharp corner into the straight. It's about the toughest and most varied mile and a half in the world.

Well, with all these hazards your position is more important than ever, and whether you get into the position that you want early enough in the race—though even after you've got it, something may happen to put you out of it—depends on how you strike off from the gate and whether you get where you want to be in the first hundred yards.

How the hell to get off . . .

You're under starter's orders, then, and you're in line according to the draw. All the jockeys will be trying to bring their horses down at just the right speed of walk for those few yards down to the tapes, and at the same time trying to keep clear of the horse on either side. However clever you are, bad luck may make you look a fool: your two best friends may happen to be on either side of you, but if their horses begin wandering in you may find yourself about to start any second, and these two jamming you in, knee to knee.

It's not nice, if you're on a short-priced favourite in the greatest race in the world, walking down those last few yards wondering how the hell you're going to get him off without jamming him into a sandwich. But all the jockeys want to keep

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HAT TRICK

as clear of one another as they can, and the horses want to keep as clear of one another as they can, unless there are one or two nervous ones lashing out a bit.

Getting your horse out of the gate, your problem is that you want him walking down freely—so that you won't be hauling on his mouth to hold him back at the moment when he should be leaping forward. But you don't want to be so easy on the rein that he goes too far forward and maybe makes a lunge and throws you into the tapes. Especially if they were just going up, which could cause a nasty accident.

You are watching to see the starter's hand moving forward on to the lever. You've got to watch how close the horses on either side are getting to you, and to feel whether your horse is just where you want him, in between being held back and being allowed to move forward, but the main thing is watching the starter. You've got to know what he's doing just before it happens. It's all anticipation, really, and the main thing is anticipating the movement of the starter's arm.

If you've done things properly all that's necessary is for you to throw your hands forward and the horse will go out.

Running on balance . . .

What you're going for now is the right position. But before you can start moving to where you want to be, you've got to be sure the horse is running on balance, running with the line of his neck between his shoulders, not hanging to the left or right, and galloping so that he begins each stride putting down the foreleg that comes natural to him.

It may be that he struck off from the gate on the other leg. After a few strides you can feel it—he's not putting all he's got into his stride, he's unhappy, isn't going smooth, and is hanging to the left or right. If he's running unbalanced, he may right himself in a few strides; you'll feel him check slightly while he

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changes and gets his natural stride and then you'll be all right. If he doesn't, then you've got to get him to do it. A touch of the whip in the right place will do it.

At this time, you won't have used your whip—but if he's hanging to the left, you needn't move your hand from the reins or your whip in your hand; you can just pivot the whip so that the bottom moves out from the horse's neck and comes in with a slight tap. That should be enough to tell him that he's doing something he oughtn't to, and since he knows he's off balance anyway the chances are he'll correct it.

But, of course, he might not. If you were free enough on the side he's hanging to, you might let him go forward a bit in the hope that he'll run himself on balance. But you might not be free enough, and in any case he still might not do it. He might go on for a furlong that way. In which case you might as well give it up. You have to with two-year-olds, especially two-year-olds racing for the first time—green. But a three-year-old, running in the Derby, and with four or five races behind him, perhaps more, oughtn't to be so difficult.

Every Derby is different, of course, but a typical one might go like this.

We're a hundred yards out of the gate, we're on balance, and I'm in the middle of the field with no accidents. I'm on a good horse. How good nobody quite knows. So far as we know he'll stay the one-and-a-half miles; he's handy enough to be steered up and down hills and round corners, and the trainer says he can manage a turn of speed if you ask him for it at the right time.

I can see that up in the front is a French horse, known to be a very strong stayer, but can't accelerate at all. The going is good—soft—which means that it doesn't favour the fast horse with the low action and small hoofs, who skims brilliantly over the surface of the ground when it's firm, but whose little feet stick quite a bit over one-and-a-half miles when the going is good to soft.

He's going to try to run us off our feet, the French horse. I'm not going to try to race against him. As soon as I can I'm going to try to get up on the rails—the shortest way round—and lie nine or ten lengths behind the leaders and watch what happens.

Anybody can get across to the rails, of course, if he's willing to let the whole field go by and then move over; but by that time it'll be too late. The difficulty is to cross to the rails without going back an inch, because the other horses aren't going to make way for you to do it. So you've got to watch for the opening, and this, apart from the luck, is a matter not only of right judgment, but of making the right judgment that little bit quicker than anybody else.

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That chestnut on the left is weakening a bit. Can't be losing its stamina—we've gone no distance yet—it's because he doesn't like racing at this pace. His jockey will give him a tap with the whip. The chances are he'll then start to go forward very quickly for a length or two, which would be just about right for me to go through there if Lester on the left of me doesn't decide to do the same thing.

Ah! Lester's looking across to the right. He's taken his whip over to the other hand. He's going to try to go through on that side not on this, because he's seen something that suits him better, so I'll be free to take the chance when it comes. And here it is: the chestnut gets the whip, spurts a stride or two, the hole shows, and we're through. I'm not on the rails though. Not quite. There are still two inside me but they're slower than I am, and from what I hear I doubt whether they'll stay, so I reckon I'll pass them whenever I want if I ask my boy to, but I won't need to; they'll drop back anyway once we strike the rising ground.

So far so good, but I don't like the pace. Knowing the pace of a race is about the most important thing you can know, judging it and wondering how it's suiting the horse you are on, and all the others. We're moving too fast in this going. There are five of them up there, none of them with any acceleration, all trying to win on stamina. At this pace the whole lot of them in front may slow up very quickly.

One tired horse up in front, slowing up quickly, can make things very difficult. A bunch of five doing the same thing can make it hell, especially if they start to do it when we're coming down the steep part of the hill.

We're three furlongs out of the gate now, and a quarter of the course covered. We're going up the hill. My horse has lengthened his stride to meet the rising ground—like a good 'un. That well-fancied French horse on my right, which I was a bit worried about, is shortening his stride, and his head is going back. Doesn't like it. Nothing to worry about from him. Nor from those two colts from the North; a little ahead on the right, again well-fancied; they don't like hitting the rising ground at this pace. Both going wide, flagging, nothing to worry about.

What I don't like is Harry Carr—three lengths ahead of me, sitting up as if he's in an armchair, looking as if he's having to hold the horse in despite the hill, with no horse within three yards of him on either side, nothing within two lengths of him in front and the colt going as smooth as silk.

He was next but three to me at the start. But there he is, up where I'd like to be if I'd had my choice. Harry is a damn good jockey, but even he can't get along without his horse. It's a

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damn good horse to get away from that start and be where he is now. This may be the one to beat.

We're nearly to the top of the hill. We've gone four furlongs. I thought so. The pace was too hot. Three tails swishing hard among the leaders: they'll be dropping back any moment. Harry Carr is moving out to his right ahead of me—he knows what's coming—and I'll do the same. If they're going to drop back fast, they can come back on my left. Harry has moved, but he's ahead of me and I needn't worry. I'm going farther from the rails than I'd have liked, but there'll be too many of them dropping back to make it safe to stay there. Some of them inside me are thinking the same thing, and start to move across. They know what's coming, but most of them won't make it in time. They'll be caught there now.

We're at the top of the hill, and still going a bit faster than we should. The jockey on the French horse is keeping him out there. He's a length clear, I reckon, and he's running free. Too free, maybe. But if the horse has got the stamina which the jockey thinks he has, judging by the way he's been riding, and if he can get him down the hill, he may give us trouble right into the straight. But he's got to get down the hill now. Coming down a hill at top speed on a horse is always difficult, but it's more difficult on the Derby course than any other I know.

First it's a long, steep hill, with that nasty corner at Tattenham at the bottom when you have to swing very sharp in to the straight. And if it's at all soft, the going can give you difficulty when you get to the bottom because it tends to hold what moisture there is. Then the hill is all on a left-hand curve, and anything moving round a sweeping curve tries to lean in to stop the natural swing to the outside.

And the problem you've got coming down the Derby hill is that if you aren't in a good position by the time you get to the bottom and turn in to the straight, you're beaten anyway. So you may want to accelerate to get into position, but on the other hand anybody bringing a horse down a nasty hill ought to be putting the brakes on, rather than asking him to go. Big horses tend to be more difficult to bring down a hill; the bigger the horse the more weight he tends to have above his legs—to be top-heavy.

We are coming down now, beginning the big curve—a couple of furlongs. The French horse wants to ease up a bit and gets a tap with the whip. His jockey won't dare force him at all when we're really coming down the hill in case he throws him off balance, so he's quickening up and fighting right now for the position he wants two furlongs on, at the corner where we go into the straight.

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Now. He shifts his whip across from his right hand to his left. He must know his horse goes to the left under the whip, or feel him beginning to hang to the left, otherwise he wouldn't bother to change his whip over. You don't want to change a whip over if you can help it. My boy's coming down the hill well. He's got good shoulders.

We're halfway down the hill. The French horse is on the inside and still in the lead. Harry Carr came a bit wide—something was dying in front of him, I reckon. If I like, I could go through on the inside now and move up and get behind the Frenchman. But I still don't think he's going to be the one to follow up the straight. And another thing: there are two others racing just like him, still going on stamina, and if the three of them drop back on me all together when we get to the bottom of the hill, round the corner at the beginning of the straight, I'd be finished. No, I won't go through on the inside.

Or I could go out to the right, and come out at the bottom of the hill nicely behind these three chestnuts about three lengths ahead of me. But I can see the boys on those three all going well with double handfuls, whips tucked away, and if they decided to move forward at any time while I was on my way up, I'd have to go wide to get on terms with them and I'm not sure my boy would do it.

Besides, I got the feeling, back there, that he's inclined to hang to his right if he's asked to do something out of the ordinary. If I were taking him out to the right and he started to hang at the bottom of the hill, with a corner going sharp to the left, I might find myself fifteen yards outside the rest of them and not able to bring him back.

I'll stay where I am. There are three or four ahead of me, but none of them looks like failing, and if I stay with them till we turn into the straight I can't be in a bad position and I'm sure they won't come back on me.

The bottom of the hill. As we turn the corner we all veer slightly to the right of what would be a perfect course, and we see a whip or two moving back to steady a horse that's hanging. And now we're in the straight.

The pace is slower. It's told on most of us. Those three up front on my right are in trouble. The inside one swung out a bit, and the other two went farther back just before we got to the bottom of the hill. His jockey pulled him back—he must have run himself off balance. The two behind him had to pull back too. They were going too close to him.

So it's the five or six of us in the centre who are going to be fighting it out in the straight. Three furlongs to go, there are

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four horses ahead of me. Two others, no, three others, are coming up on my right, but they've got their whips out and I don't think they'll stay with me very long. The way the four in front of me are going it's unlikely that anything's going to win from behind. They've got enough in hand, those few, to hold off any late run now. I'd like to take a look round and see who's there and how they look, but there's somebody two lengths ahead of me and a little to my left who may be troublesome.

His jockey hasn't got the whip out, so you might think that he's going quite well. But I know that horse: I remember them telling me that when he's tired it's no good giving him the whip. So the fact that he's not getting the whip doesn't mean that he isn't tired, and that little unevenness suggests that he is.

When a horse gets tired he rolls, and if that one rolls to the right he'll be slap in front of me. So I can't afford to take my eye off him to see what's going on behind. But I don't think anything can come from behind, not at the pace we've been going. I think those four in front are the ones to beat.

Yes, he's rolling, but it's an ill wind, and since I happened to spot him at the right moment as he rolls right into my path I can bear gently to my left, avoiding him and getting on to the rails at the same time. Nicer if I could have got on to the rails back on the hill, when it would have helped more, but at least if there is anything behind me with a chance—a furlong and a half to go—he won't find it so easy to come through now. And with this little group I can see from the corner of my eye on the right he'll have a hell of a job to get on terms with me, going around them and up on that side.

The four in front are beginning to fight it out. They're three lengths ahead of me, and a blanket would cover them. Lester's looked back. He's the inside of the four, and he's wondering if it would be worth while edging over to the rails.

Does he think I'm far enough back for him to get there ahead of me? If he decides to go, and the other two go with him, I'm either going to be shut in or I'll have to swing back out again to my right. What can I best afford? A burst of speed now to get there before they do, or chance him doing it—if that's what he means to do—and risk going out to the right later if it's necessary?

I'll move now. Pass my whip through my right hand to my left, butt in the palm, holding it now like a conductor's baton, and swing it at a short arm's length, well away from his side. That's enough. No need to use it. A couple of swings, and my boy's moving fast. I'm on the rails, and Lester, Doug Smith, Harry and Bill Williamson have stayed where they were.

Somebody's making a run in the middle of the course. He's

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coming up fast, but I don't think he'll make it. His whip is out and he's hammering away—no, he can't make it. So it's still us five. A hundred and fifty yards to go. Those four have got their whips out. Better go for mine. I don't think my boy will hang under the whip so I'll take it across to my right.

A hundred yards to go. My whip's out. One, two, three, four moderate whacks on his rump, and he leans even closer to the ground and stretches out, giving me everything. With fifty yards to go it's still anybody's race . . .

It's been a hard race, and I'm sweating. Gripping with your knees and calves all the way round, your weight on your toes in the stirrups most of the way round, heaving forward with the rhythm of the horse and throwing your elbows and forearms forward with the gait, and all of it twice as much in this last hundred yards—means I've lost half a pound or so the last couple of minutes, maybe three-quarters. A jockey might easily lose a pound in a hard-won race over a mile and a half.

And there we are. Another Derby. Another race. I don't think I made any mistakes, not this time. That's the main thing. I hate it when I know I made a mistake—asked the horse for his effort too soon, opened up to the right only to meet a horse I should have known was tired—you know, something like that, and it makes no difference to me whether I won or lost if I know I rode the wrong race.

There's always something to learn, and I suppose it's the same in this game as anything else where going on learning really matters—you can only learn from criticising yourself, and criticising yourself, well, you're giving yourself the whip.

Yes, it's quite a race, the Derby. Gordon Richards began in 1921, but it was 1953 before he won the Derby. That tells you a bit about it—if it took the world's greatest jockey that time to win it. I haven't done it yet. I hope it won't take long.

KENNETH HARRIS,

WHO'S WHO?

A man looking at a portrait on his wall remarked, "That person's father was my father's son. I have no brothers and no sons." What relation was the person whose portrait the man was looking at to the speaker?

Now don't jump to the conclusion that you have heard this one before, it is exceedingly improbable, although you may have met with something similar.

For baffled readers the answer is at the foot of page 85.

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He had time for just one shot

SPECIAL BULLET

BY E. J. BAILEY

HENNESSY sat in the squat cane chair, mopping his face with a silk handkerchief and listening to the old familiar sounds. Above him, a giant fan rotated noisily. Outside, the first of the night bugs thudded against the wire-screened windows of the District Officer's bungalow. From a long way off a lone jackal called over and over. The heat, the tiredness from the plane trip, and the jolting taxi—none of these things mattered. It was still good to be back.

The D.O. was sifting through papers. Once he reached for a rubber stamp and impressed it carefully. Hennessy waited. He had been through these formalities a hundred times and it was to be expected. True, each time the forms seemed to have multiplied but this wasn't his club back in New York. This was the roof of India, poised and overhanging the border of Nepal. This was tiger country.

"I remember you, of course," the D.O. said. "A year ago you came to this district to hunt tiger and leopard, and you were unsuccessful. Tell me, Mr. Hennessy, why did you return?"

Hennessy deliberated. He knew the question was loaded, but he also knew that his papers were in order. There was no real reason why he should tell this lean, intense Indian anything at all. On the other hand this man, with his precise, public-school English, was more than another government official; he was overlord of seven thousand square miles. When he asked a question he expected an answer, but how do you explain some things? How do you tell a man such as the D.O., who has a hundred things a day to do, who works a ninety-hour week, that you, Hennessy, have spent an entire year doing nothing? How do you even try to tell him that you started from scratch and built an empire; that it became so big it strangled you; that you became so old that they had eased you out to grass; that you had an income grossing a half million, but had nothing to do?

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"I came to shoot a tiger," he said simply.

Somewhere out in the half dark other jackals were homing on the pathfinder, and the sounds of bigger game kept breaking in. Despite the fan, perspiration channelled down one side of Hennessy's face.

"Why here?" the D.O. said slowly. "You could, with your influence, have shot a tiger in Mysore. You could have been the guest of a Maharaja and drunk iced whisky in a permanent tree-lodge, with a fenced-in jungle, and a hundred beaters driving the tiger along a plotted path. Here you must kill a tiger the old way, as did the pioneers. It takes nerve and cunning and a lifetime of skill to outsmart a tiger or a leopard."

That's so right, Hennessy thought. That's so logical, but you haven't lived as I have the past year. You haven't been surrounded by an obsequious flock who saw to it that you never filled a glass, who told you what to eat, and how to exercise, who drove you to a faraway place where you might lift your head again, and make your own decisions. Such a place is this village. A tiger is no fawning respecter of V.I.P.s.

Aloud, he said, "I have hunted most of my life. I have flushed jaguars along Amazon tributaries and I have played marlin and big shark from game boats. But a tiger—that is the real test. To kill a tiger, unaided, is achieved by few men."

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The D.O. handed back the papers. "Be it on your own head," he said resignedly. "Your quarters are ready and I will assign men to you tomorrow." He paused. "There is one tiger I suggest you leave alone. As you will hear of him soon enough, I will tell you myself. He is a man-eater and tomorrow an experienced killer of tigers will hunt him down. I think that is all, Mr. Hennessy."

That is all, Mr. Hennessy. A man spends a whole year sitting out on the patio, watching big waves break on the oyster-encrusted rocks, and the gulls wheel high—waiting to build strength so one day he can tell them that J.H. is going on another safari. He travels halfway round the world to a stinking Indian village for this thin, brown man to get up from the table and say the palaver is finished. It wasn't fair. It wasn't at all the way he had pictured it in his patio dreams. He walked outside and along the dirt path to the inn, brushing aside the urchins who clamoured and the old men who implored. He was being rushed when he didn't like to be rushed.

His room smelt of disinfectants and lime and by local standards it was very clean. His luggage had been stacked in a corner. He carried the gun cases over to his cot. The Magnum .450 he checked first, because this was his favourite rifle. The double-barrelled shotgun he had brought in case he tangled with a leopard at night. Sitting there, cradling the rifle, gave him some warmth. He didn't want to eat. Later, perhaps, he would break into one of the bottles of whisky he always brought. Right at this moment he wanted to think . . .

It was an hour or so later when he heard the hubbub downstairs. He walked out on to the small landing. The innkeeper was hustling past, a pitcher of water in one hand.

Downstairs at a table was an old man, older than Hennessy himself. He had an artillery piece that could have been a .500 Express but Hennessy wasn't sure, not from this distance.

"That is Carter," the innkeeper said. "That is the killer of man-eaters."

Hennessy wanted to laugh. Somewhere the script was way off beam. This man was old—so old that his face was wizened and dehydrated, and his skin hung in folds. It was only when Hennessy had walked down the stairs and neared the table that he noticed the arrow-straight back, and the rock-steady hands. Then, too, he realised why this man looked like an Indian, yet was named Carter.

Normally, and specially since the British pulled out, a Eurasian was a nobody, a man of neither world. Yet Hennessy knew that

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in the eyes of these people Carter was as a god, for he had killed man-eaters. Tomorrow, or the next day, or the next month he would kill another man-eater. No one doubted this, because he was Carter. Even the D.O. had confidence in Carter, and the D.O. was no fool. Hennessy stood there watching, listening, and slowly came the idea. To shoot a tiger, yes, that was something. But to kill a man-eater—that would surely become a page in Indian history.

"As we know," Carter was saying, "many have tried and none has succeeded. Who can say that I, too, will not fail? I have examined the pug marks closely and this much I know. It is a male and he is neither old nor weary. As with all man-eaters, this one is full of cunning, and unpredictable. True, there is a pattern to the killings, but he is still unpredictable. Now I am cunning, too, but I am also old and tired, so I can promise you but one thing—I will not stop until I have killed this beast or I am killed myself."

No one took any notice of Hennessy as he sat down. An hour passed, with Carter sometimes talking sometimes silent. Once he called for oil and worked over the old rifle. Another time he told them the story of the Panar leopard, who killed over four hundred humans. Hennessy knew there was something different, yet something familiar about Carter. It could have been that he never smiled, or perhaps it was the way he talked, or yet again the dedication. This was no glib executive expanding on takeovers. This was a simple man, whose only concern was to track and kill a man-eater.

Why should they care about Hennessy? He was one more stranger with a pocketful of money, who could hire enough elephants to trample every tiger in the forest. In the morning, he would have men and equipment. They would go forth and in due course would set up a tiger, any tiger, so the great one might shoot expensive bullets from his hand-tooled rifle, hire skinners, air-freight the pelt to New York.

But they didn't know everything about Hennessy. They didn't know of the idea that had germinated in his brain, that had fermented, and spilt into his bloodstream. Hennessy wanted to scream that he, too, could hunt the man-eater. But that wasn't the way. The way was to sell himself to Carter, to get across to this ancient one the unassailable logic that two guns were better than one. At the right moment he broke in.

"My name is Hennessy," he said. "I have listened to you and I have learnt a great deal. For many reasons it is very important to me that I shoot a tiger. If I go with you it is even possible I will kill a man-eater. But it is your hunt, and if I

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crowd you in any way you will tell me. I will even quit if you say as much. These things I promise."

It wasn't easy to be humble before Carter. It wasn't easy at all. The waiting for his reply was agony.

"There are things you should know," Carter said slowly. "First, that you and I are old men. When a man is young, to kill a tiger is a great adventure. It makes the blood run fast. To kill when you are old is a job of work, nothing more. To kill or be killed. Now, about this tiger. He is clever and he thinks as a man thinks. For a year he has defied all hunters and he has slipped through three beats. During this time he has killed seventy-four humans. This morning he carried off a man who was twenty-five years old and in his prime. He dragged him a quarter of a mile uphill through thick scrub. He may have taken him much farther, because at this point the rain came and washed out all trace. You think about this and we will talk again in the morning. Now, I need sleep."

With Carter went the others. Only Hennessy stayed, to think. Carter was right. This was a time to take stock, and the facts stood out like neons in the streets back at home. What was a man to do? Go back to the lush pasture and wait, or finish on some limestone outcrop, bloodied and ripped? He thought about a hilltop cave he had once inspected, which had been the home of a killer leopard. He remembered the grisly evidence scattered about the cave floor and the way it smelt; it smelt all the time. One half of him wanted to be sick, there on the inn table. The other half, dominant, ignored the facts. It was then he knew that he would see Carter in the morning and tell him he wanted to go. He knew he would say this, no matter what dreams came in the night.

"It is good whisky," Carter said, in the morning. "It reminds me of a night, between the wars, when I killed a leopard that had been killing women on the estates of a prince. This prince was sufficiently pleased to give me twenty rupees and a bottle of whisky."

Hennessy nodded, glad he had remembered the whisky. It was a small price to pay for what Carter was offering him, the chance to do something, to be able to go back and tell them that J.H. wasn't washed up. But Carter had started to talk about the tiger, and Hennessy sweated over every word.

"It is clear he is cunning beyond the normal cunning. He does not take cattle baits. A score of times they have tethered goats and buffalo calves, but he is too wise to move under the guns in the machans . . . Mostly, he has killed women."

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"Why?" Hennessy probed.

Carter spread his hands. "A woman works in the fields, fetches water, goes into the forest to gather oak-leaves for cattle fodder. These and similar tasks. Usually she is too busy, too tired, too weighed down. The tiger will strike and it is over—her neck broken. That is the way it happens most of the time."

Hennessy hoped that Carter wouldn't notice the tremor in his hands, or the way the veins in his skin stood out every time he was under any kind of pressure.

"But there is this one place," Carter went on. "From this area he has made more kills than elsewhere." He took a crumpled map from his pocket, and spread it flat on the table. "Eight days ago he took a woman, here. Yesterday morning, early, he killed a man, here. He is moving east, almost in a straight line. The day after tomorrow he may have passed. Now is the time—today. We must be there, waiting for him."

Hennessy gulped the Scotch and felt it sear down his throat and lie kicking in his stomach. It was about to fan out into his bloodstream, which was best of all. His wife, his friends, his associates—none of them knew how much he depended on the whisky to keep him in the game. Unless, perhaps, Carter? Who knew what passed through Carter's mind?

"That is why we must go alone." Carter finished his drink. "A truck will take us a few miles up the road, where we will follow a forestry track. We should arrive in late afternoon."

Hennessy took a fast slug. "Let's do it, then. Let's do it right now."

Carter stood up. "Let us try," he said soberly.

Hennessy went to his room and picked up the Magnum. He had readied everything the night before. Everything was there: the finest money could buy. The ammo; soft-nosed, split-nickel-cased, specially tooled brass tips. Hennessy's bullets had thudded into big game all the world over. He recalled, in that moment, the glorious second of impact when he once stopped a bull rhino with one shot from a moving truck. Two ton of rhino dropping as though some witch-doctor had waved a fetish stick. That had been in the Congo. How far back in time? Hennessy wasn't sure. He wasn't sure about a lot of things.

Carter was waiting beside the truck, his gear and supplies pitifully small compared with Hennessy's. They crammed in front, along with the Indian driver. An early May sun beat down on the truck and the dirt road and on everything in sight. Everyone waved and shouted as they took off, and a million flies flared up from the rear of the two-tonner . . .

Once, when the truck slewed round a bend, Hennessy thought

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of his Jag back at the garage. Perhaps, too, at this very moment, certain stocks would have firmed a couple of points and Hennessy would have gone another fifty thousand ahead. And it all added up to nothing. Here, one thing mattered—they had to make contact with the tiger.

The truck stopped suddenly, and Hennessy could see the forestry path, no more than five feet wide. The driver helped them select gear and then they started to walk, and almost immediately there was a sense of loneliness.

Birds were all about, flushed with zeal after the long migrations. There was evidence of food animals; deer, sarao, pig. Butterfly orchids festooned from gnarled trees. It was worth looking at; it was a colour film on the largest screen in the world. But all the time there was the thought of the tiger, who would be padding through tall grass as he targeted in. Hennessy chilled under the sweat.

"All right," he said suddenly to Carter. "So how do we do it, just the two of us?"

Carter never slackened pace. "I should have explained back at the inn. It is all so simple. I will be the woman. I have with me a woman's clothes. The tiger will attack me and you will shoot him."

"Now hold on a minute!" Hennessy knew he was shouting when he ought not to shout. Carter ignored him, but then Carter could not know what was running through Hennessy's mind. Because all Carter had to back up his decoy act was an old man with a shaky gun-hand and a flask of pricey whisky. That, and no more. Hennessy wanted time to tell Carter these things, but Carter kept walking on ahead . . .

Once they passed a village where the people stayed close to their huts. Some waved and called to Carter. Hennessy wanted to wave back but his arms were leaden and his feet were killing him. But he did notice that there was no one working in the fields.

"That was at my suggestion," Carter said. "The D.O. has sent messages. For three days the women will not go out. There will be no wood cut, or crops worked. This way the tiger will become hungry as never before. He will take more risks."

Hennessy shivered. If Carter was right in his calculations then they were walking down one side of a triangle and the tiger another. They would meet. It was inevitable they would meet.

The forest was thinning. Giant oaks rose out of tall grass and bracken, and goat tracks crisscrossed the forestry path. Something big and awkward slithered down a sawn-off oak and cut a swath through the grass.

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"Sloth bear," Carter said. "We must be careful to avoid such animals and trust they leave us alone. To fire a shot from this point onward would surely warn the tiger."

Two more hours they walked and Hennessy wondered how much more he could take. The whisky had almost gone and several times he tripped and fell. Then, miraculously, Carter slowed.

Hennessy looked about. They were on a small plateau, heavily grassed and ferned, with ravines falling away on three sides and a steep hill rising westward. The trees were mostly oak, with some ash and holly. The ravines were choked with saplings. But Carter had stopped; he was peering into the dense new-green foliage of a giant oak.

"Here is the place," he said. "You will climb this tree and prepare yourself. I will proceed to gather leaves from those trees there." He indicated a clump of oaks. "I will then walk along this track, by your tree. At all times you must watch for the tiger. If I can signal you I will. As to direction, he should move down the hill slope, but he is wise, and may circle the level ground and come up one of the ravines. We will know when we hear the sounds—a kakar barking, the shrieking of birds, the vultures who trail in anticipation. Yes, there will be warnings, but we will not talk for although he has poor sense of smell his hearing is acute."

It wasn't easy climbing the oak. Twice he almost fell. Wild rose creeper fouled the Magnum and the effort to get it free winded him. It wasn't easy to settle either, in a position where he would be able to cover Carter at all times. When he did contrive this and looked down, Carter was no more—there was an old woman, shuffling under the oaks, jerking the branched leaves and stacking them. Where Carter had stashed his rifle and the gear Hennessy didn't know. All he could do was sit there in his eyrie like some condor in the Andes, alone and scared. Presently the rain came.

An hour passed. The light was fading and soon Carter would have to call it off. Hennessy watched him plod through the grass under the trees, bent under his load in the fashion of an old woman. The rain had gone but the tree dripped incessantly, and with the rain gone the red ants had returned. Hennessy tried to move his legs but they were cramped. He squinted at Carter and tentatively drew a bead. Then, out of nowhere and nothing, and in the general direction of the other side of the hill, a kakar started to bark.

Hennessy wasn't tired any more. He was sick with fear and apprehension but the tiredness had gone. He peered through

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the leaf sight and centred on Carter, who seemed indifferent. Now the thrushes and babblers had joined forces with the kakar. Hennessy swivelled his eyes in a three-hundred-and-sixty-degree check. He saw nothing. In the half light how could a man be expected to see the tiger? He started to shake all over. It wasn't fair of Carter to pass the buck in this way.

How could a man watch for the tiger and watch Carter at the same time?

He tried to remember the things he had been told on the long walk, how you could follow the progress of a tiger through tall grass, how you could tell by the movement. He strained his eyes and thought he detected something at the head of one of the ravines, but wasn't sure. He kept staring and then, before it merged into grass and was lost, he saw him. A split second, that was all, but he was looking at the dirty reddish-yellow of the man-eater . . .

A dozen thoughts and fears milled in Hennessy's brain. He wanted to call Carter, tell him that the tiger had seen him and was stalking him. No, Carter would not like that. Carter would be deliriously happy for the tiger to be doing just that. But the man-eater had vanished and who knew where and when he would reappear? He was a professional, afraid of nothing in the forest. He was a veteran of the hit-and-drag kill; he was master of the creeping, crawling approach and the lightning-fast strike. He could fell a seven-hundred-pound ox and drag him two miles. What was killing Carter to this tiger?

One precious minute of time, then another. Still there were no tell-tale signs. The ants had got inside Hennessy's shirt and were stinging him, and he wanted a drink more than he had ever wanted one in his life.

Now Carter had adjusted his load and was starting to walk along the goat track. He was only thirty yards from Hennessy but the light was worsening fast. Then, for no real reason, Hennessy took one stabbing look down at the base of his tree, and froze. There, crouched low and inching past, was the tiger. He had come up out of the ravine and circled wide, checking the plateau for machans. Satisfied, he was waiting for Carter. Ten, fifteen, twenty seconds, and he would spring—and Carter would be dead.

Hennessy tried to move his legs without success. He endeavoured to depress the rifle but to do so would make noise. He had set up an arc of fire the way Carter had instructed. He could cover the old man by the trees and along the track, and nothing more. He could do but one thing—wait until the tiger sprang. One shot, that was all the time he had. He wanted to

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yell to Carter but the words jammed because his stomach was forcing itself up into his throat, making him want to vomit.

When it happened it was so fast, so diabolically fast. One fraction of a second the tiger was frozen, then he was in mid-air, his taloned paw ready to club Carter. The hugeness of him blotted everything out and, instinctively, because he knew he had to do it even at the risk of hitting Carter, Hennessy fired. No real aim—just one shot, got off by reflex. The tiger went down, his paws seemingly wrapped around Carter, as though in some macabre love scene. Neither of them moved, and only the birds shrieked perpetually.

Hennessy sat there, working the circulation back into his legs. He half clambered, half fell out of the tree. The tiger still lay there and because he didn't move it finally registered on Hennessy that the tiger was dead. There was blood on Carter's face but his pulse was all right so he knew that Carter was alive.

It took a lot of effort to drag the tiger off Carter and more time to revive the old man.

Then, when it was done, Hennessy wanted to shout to the forest that together they had killed the man-eater. Best moment of all was when Carter smiled.

"It is sher," Carter said, reverting to the native name. "When he is stretched he will be ten feet and that is a very big tiger. A male, in his prime. Now, you stay here while I fetch men from the village."

"I will stay," Hennessy said. A flood of confidence had rooted out the fears.

Nothing could take this tiger from him, nothing. *He* was ten feet tall; he was four decades back in time to the roistering, filibuster days. He was living.

The D.O. stopped writing when Hennessy came into the room. He half got up and indicated the cane chair. Hennessy sat down. It seemed hard to realise that four days back he had sat in this chair and was a nobody. Now he had returned, killer of a man-eater. The thought was warm and comforting. He imagined how, this very moment, they would be rubbing alum over the wet spots in the tiger's skin as it stretched taut between the pegs. Nine feet eleven inches—a lot of tiger.

"My report on the tiger," the D.O. said, putting down his pen. "I have to get it off to the authorities at Almora. There is a sizeable bounty on this tiger."

"That belongs to Carter, obviously," Hennessy said. "All I want is the skin."

"Of course, that is yours by right," the D.O. said softly.

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" But tell me, have you ever given thought as to why a tiger should become a man-eater? "

Hennessy shrugged. " There are many reasons."

" True, there are many. Sometimes it is after a tiger has foolishly tangled with a porcupine. Some quills are embedded in the tiger's pads, the wounds turn septic and the tiger can no longer pursue his natural food, such as the fleet-footed deer. Other times he will be crippled in combat with other animals, another cat, a large boar, a buffalo perhaps. In this case, however, the tiger was crippled by a bullet which had lodged in the right foreleg." He slid open a desk drawer. " A very special type of bullet which has been seen but twice in this district. Perhaps you recognise it? "

Hennessy took the bullet. He tried to find the right words but they eluded him. " Are you positive? " he said finally.

" Aren't you? " the D.O. said flatly.

Hennessy hesitated. " But I did kill him. The man-eater is no more."

" You killed him one year too late, Mr. Hennessy," the D.O. said, not unkindly. " Now I have given much thought to this matter and I feel it is best that you take your trophy and do not return to this area."

Hennessy thought of the patio—quiet, peaceful, full of emptiness. He thought of the tiger, his tiger. Once every five days on average, through four seasons, the tiger had raked and ripped.

" Does Carter know? " he asked suddenly.

The D.O. nodded. " He knows, and he forgives. He is eternally grateful that you killed the man-eater."

" He forgives? " Hennessy echoed.

" I thought you knew," the D.O. said politely. " The tiger's last victim but one was Carter's wife."

It was quiet then, as though he was a million miles in space, and nothing moved but the fan—round and round—round and round.

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HAM OMLET!

Darkness brought life back to Igdir. Three officers sat near me, confronting platoons of beer-bottles: one of them started to talk of Shakespeare.

" I like very much his play *Stormy Night*."

" *Stormy Night?* "

" Yes, where Ferdinand have Miranda."

" Oh yes, it is very fine."

" But of all I like best *The Omlet*. That is the finest."

LORD KINROSS, *Within the Taurus*

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Should one harbour even an affectionate ghost?

THE GIRL IN THE GREEN TREE

BY LESLIE BONNET

THESE things happened so very long ago that the depth and movement of them seem now to be flattened and halted by the weight of time. The fleeing figure, the scampering pursuer, the harsh, arid landscape are like the prim tableau on the willow-pattern plate, frozen by the coldness of distance into held attitudes against a stage set.

Yet, when these things were happening, blood ran as hot, tears fell as freely, men and women embraced as desperately in that old China as anywhere since.

And other things happened, such as happen perhaps no more. Man was then two thousand years nearer to his beginnings. Body and spirit had not been together for so very long.

Step down into the Chinese picture; down and in, until the time is close to the eyes . . . That stylised, cantering old woman is mother Shao. Before her—running, now almost out of the picture—is Chi. There are sounds now, the flat sounds that come out of a hard winter landscape. There is a wind, even, harsh and bitter, stirring the pine tops . . .

Old mother Shao, raving with rage, bounded along, brandishing the chopper. She twitched the padded cotton gown, that she wore in winter, half up her shanks to give her more freedom of movement. Her speed was terrifying.

Only just ahead, little Chi ran and cried.

"Daughter of a turtle!" shrieked the old woman, "pray pause, and permit me to split you down the middle!"

Chi raced on. Her little frame was too skimpy for halving.

On this north side of the Yi-lu mountain the ground soon began to slope steeply. Boulders strewed the hard ground. The girl's narrow lead began to lengthen. Fleet with fear she leapt ahead. Mother Shao's harsh words grew fainter.

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Then ceased entirely.

Chi stopped, panting, spent . . .

She looked back down the mountain slope. Mercifully distant now, old mother was squatting heavily upon a rock, but sharpening the chopper.

With a sigh of despair Chi stumbled onwards, up towards where the icy wilderness began.

Old mother Shao had not been as vexed as she had pretended. Her conduct, in the hard circumstances, was not as censure-deserving as it appeared.

Food was scarce this harsh season in the small Shao household. The servant, little Chi, had never been satisfactory. Picked up, an abandoned child, ten years before, she had grown slowly. Slim and slight where she should have been broad and sturdy, of what use was she as a labourer on the bitter land? There was not much, in any case, that she could do in winter besides going up the mountain to gather firewood. And of that she could carry but little, and would return from the heights, silent, always blue with cold, and never sufficiently burdened.

And so, now that the ice had descended so far down the mountain as to make wood gathering impossible, what was there to do but to rid oneself of such a useless mouth?

So old mother Shao, when she had recovered breath, took only one glance at the still-retreating figure of Chi before beginning to retrace her steps. With a relieved mind, the chopper tucked under her arm, she trudged back, down to the leaning hovel of the Shao farmhouse.

Chi, certain only that she could not return, struggled higher and higher up the mountainside.

There was little enough of the girl. There were two large eyes in a small dirty face, a slender body that her thin, torn coat could not cover, breasts pomegranate-small, legs too long for the tattered cotton trousers.

The air was heavy and dank. Up there every rock was ice-encased and every twig and blade of grass was sheathed in it.

Never warm from autumn to springtime, Chi did not cringe to the cold as another might have done. She climbed ever higher, ice splinters crackling under her feet, until she was so high that the air sighed with its burden of coldness, until the slender mountain peaks to east and west nodded in the twinkling chill.

There was fear, but no loneliness, in the heart of Chi as she stumbled upward. The Yi-lu mountain, like all high places, was amply peopled with wild creatures, and more plentifully with spirits.

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The beasts were most of them small, like the lean mountain hares. Only the mountain tigers were to be avoided: and the Wang Liang. But these last were secretive and remote, stumping down from the high tops in their huge human shapes only when the need to eat flesh became irresistible.

But as for spirits, they thronged, as they did in any of the lonely places. Some of them were well known, like the dead and blinded General Ma Fang of the old Chou kingdom. Chi herself had once seen his bent figure faltering among the rocks in the evening gloom, searching with outspread fingers for his starved concubine, Lee-nyiang.

So, with a distinct sense of moving amongst a throng that drew apart to give her passage, Chi climbed the steepening slopes. A blackness towards the east denoted that day was almost done. She gained the sparse shelter of a clump of riven and stunted pines and, curling herself into a ball at the foot of one of them, slept.

Night passed to the far cries of beasts, the creaking of boughs, and the crack and rumble of tumbling fields of snow.

When she awoke, Chi was stiff with frost, and hungry.

There being nothing familiar to eat or drink, she sucked ice and chewed pine needles with wistful persistence.

How long this twilit life continued, who can say? Chi grew accustomed to pine needles, almost came to relish them. Indeed, she found herself hankering for the fresher, greener ones that grew out of reach in the heads of the trees.

And as this odd diet continued something strange occurred. Chi gradually began to grow a covering of soft hair.

It spread slowly and covered her. It lengthened. Soon she was clothed in a rich, white, soft fur. And it was when the fur had completely grown that Chi discovered that she could fly.

This was less remarkable. Already the discerning will have perceived that Chi herself had by now become a spirit. And ghosts are weightless. They could all of them fly, had they the inclination to do so. Chi had a strong incentive; for she coveted those thicker, greener pine needles at the very tops of the trees.

It was a clear night of stillness—one month, two months, after her escape? Chi had been asleep, dreaming of a bountiful meal, when she found herself awake, floating purposefully above that clump of pine trees.

A brilliant yellow moon hung over the quivering mountains. The air shook with frost. Above the immensities of sky and jostling peaks Chi swooped and soared; then landed lightly on the very crown of the bushiest tree. She laughed with delight; and crammed herself.

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It was natural that this new-found mobility should be exploited. Before many evenings had passed Chi spread her search for more luscious food over an ever-widening area. Over mountain shoulders, along crouching valleys, the slim white figure could have been seen floating; above the snarls of beasts, the fret of men, the whimpers of ghosts.

Now it happened that, some twenty-four li distant from the northern side of Yi-lu mountain, there dwelt a holy man. His family name was Yu and his personal names were H'si Ho. A hut of bamboo, roofed with banana leaves, was his shelter; a pine tree of fine proportions gave him shade; and the turbulent waters of the blue Min river filled the air nearby with excited sound.

Yu H'si was not yet of a high degree of holiness. He could boast of no more than thirty years. The desire to progress along the path of Heavenly wisdom had seized him too lately for him to deserve public applause. None of the scattered population in that land came to bring gifts or to do him honour. And so, while Yu spent much of his energies in contemplation of the divine attributes of T'ai I, The Great Unity, having the highest regard for this First of the Celestial Spirits, he was forced, in order to supply strength for such exercises, to cultivate some few mou of land and to fish industriously in the Min river.

In these ways he spent a blameless life, revering the medical skills of the great T'ai I, and confident of being carried at the last by that Divine Ferryman in the boat of lotus flowers of nine colours to the shore of salvation.

One morning a frown clouded the fresh and by no means displeasing face of Yu H'si Ho when he perceived that the high crown of the pine tree had been damaged.

On the next morning the pine tree top had so ragged an aspect that it looked as if it had been munched with undue gusto.

Wise in his way, Yu suspected evil influences directed, perhaps, towards arousing some passion of anger. Such undesirable emotions would hinder the fruitful contemplation of the Divine.

He therefore remained calm. And calmly he hid that night in a clump of bamboo and kept watch.

He waited for a long time. A waning moon was dangling from the pine tree's lower branches before anything stirred. Then, away in the frozen sky, Yu heard a whistling sound. While he still held his breath, a white creature swooped down on to the tree-top with a soft downy thud, and began to eat.

Yu H'si Ho did not move.

The creature ate its fill, belched in a delicate manner, and then floated off, insolently heavier, towards the mountains.

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Yu retired to sleep.

In the morning he could see his course of action clearly. It was too evident that his visitor must be either a ghost come to plague him or one of The Eight Immortals calling in this guise to test his progress in piety.

Yu was honest enough with himself to expect that the intruder would prove to be a ghost.

The simplest test would be to provide proper food. The Immortals do not touch human food: ghosts relish it.

So, that evening after the light had gone even from the highest red-tipped peaks, Yu placed a sumptuous meal on a table under the tree. He had spent anxious hours in preparing it. One could almost see the enticing smell of it rising in mouth-watering spirals to the topmost branches of much-chewed pine.

To deal with the ghost, if it were one, Yu took a stout staff. He knew that ghosts could not endure a sound belabouring. To deal with a possible Immortal he took nothing. Excessively courteous persuasion would be the only resort with such a Being.

At last, down came the slim white creature. It stayed in the upper branches only long enough to smell the rich food. Then, with one swift dart, it was on the table, cramming meat into its mouth with one hand and fish with the other.

So Yu knew it was a ghost.

He sprang out into the uncertain light. " What kind of a ghost are you? "

The ghost attempted to fly away.

Yu seized it by the mane. " What kind of a ghost are you? " he shouted again, bold with fear.

Chi could not answer. She did not know. She began to weep.

Yu was not to be deceived. Ghosts will resort to any trick. He raised his staff with his free hand.

But, even as it began to descend, he checked it. The ghost appeared altogether too small and helpless. Yu looked far and he looked near; but he could not find heart to punish it.

He grabbed the creature more tightly and held it under one arm. There was no doubt but that it was a ghost. It seemed quite weightless.

In a few strides Yu gained his hut, pulled open the door and flung the thing into the far corner. It landed noiselessly.

Then, spreading his pallet across the doorway, he huddled against the shut door and prepared to sleep. Perhaps the morning would bring wisdom.

But it was hard to sleep. Beneath the roar of the river he could hear a soft sighing from the far corner.

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Chi was restless under a roof again; and there was a warmth that she could feel, over there by the door.

Yu slept.

When morning light woke him from unusually profound slumber he found the ghost creature hugged close to his back, one soft arm about his breast.

He got to his feet with a great start. But it seemed that no harm had come to him.

The ghost had got to its feet too. It looked frightened. Yu opened the door and motioned it outside. And there it stood, looking up at the morning sky with a sudden gleam in the eyes. Then it hung its head and entered the hut again.

When Yu had washed himself in the blue river he prepared some rice and cabbage and offered a bowl to the ghost, which it ate heartily. All through the day, while Yu went about his tasks and pondered upon the complications of having a resident ghost, the creature rested, apparently content, in the hut, or wandered about the clearing. They ate the evening meal together. Then, when the peaks were sunset-pink and the valley was quietly filling up with darkness, the ghost floated up into the sky and went away.

That night Yu H'si Ho was awakened from sleep by a timid tapping on his door. Opening it, he found a fawning white ghost. Not altogether displeased, he let it in. Directed to the hut corner, Chi settled there for but a little time before insinuating herself into closer proximity to the over-lenient Yu.

Yu shuddered at the extreme coldness of this contact. But by degrees heat passed from the one to the other and was returned again. Long before the dying moon had cleared the mountains, a very comfortable warmth pleased them both.

Lying with his back towards his visitor, who again warmly clasped him, Yu began to perceive from positive indications that his ghost was a female one. His first emotion was one of dismay. Further reflection convinced him that perturbation was unnecessary. A ghost was a ghost. Man or woman, what could it matter?

Yu's life continued in an equable manner for a while. He worked his fields with perhaps more attention and contemplated the Infinite rather less fixedly. Chi spent her time with him, sometimes shyly lending a hand by leading the water buffalo while Yu strained behind the wooden plough, sometimes seemingly content to gaze at him from beneath meekly lowered lashes. Once she wandered away and returned with a small armful of sticks for the fire.

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She had begun to talk, not freely, not about herself, but of the small tasks on the holding, and of food and of warmth.

Each evening she flew off, away beyond sight; and each night she returned to share Yu's couch.

But before Yu's eyes a strange thing was happening. As if the result of eating human food, the white fur seemed to be growing less and less lushly on Chi's plumpening body. And, at the same time, it seemed that Chi was gaining weight.

Yu first noticed this heaviness one morning when he picked her up in his arms, as he had often done, fetching her to breakfast. To his astonishment his arms sagged. He looked down at Chi, laughing with embarrassment. She looked back at him, biting her lip shyly.

Nothing was said. But Yu took care to lift Chi every day. And every day the weight grew more evident, the fur more sparse.

There came an evening when, as the sun disappeared behind the peaks, Chi struggled just a foot's height into the air and then collapsed on to the ground. Yu stared at her as she lay flat, laughing at her own helplessness. He bent and picked her up in his arms. He was whooping with happiness. In some way this disability was to him immensely reassuring. His strong arms tightened. Chi clung to him enthusiastically.

And as he stood there, joyful, conscious of strength, confident, the truth came suddenly to Yu H'si Ho. He was holding nothing less than a naked young woman in his arms.

His alarm was excessive, instant. There was a thud and a little cry. Chi had been dropped as if she had been a handful of glowing charcoal.

Behind his set expression of serenity Yu's mind struggled to adjust itself. It was one matter for a young aspirant to immortality to harbour, in charity, a ghost, even an affectionate one. It was something entirely different for him to consort with a now undeniably human female, and one of such profuse charms.

His brow furrowed, Yu shut Chi securely in the hut. Then loading himself with as many vegetables and smoked fish as the baskets on his carrying-pole could hold, he set off for the village of Ch'in Chow . . .

Just before daylight began to fail on the following day, he returned. He undid the door and called for Chi.

When she came out he laid on the ground before her the contents of a bundle which he gravely unrolled. There were little shoes of red silk, trousers of blue cotton, a gown of red, and a tunic of white.

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Kneeling there, naked, her clean body jade-yellow, Chi lifted up the gaily embroidered garments one by one, gazing at Yu between whiles with wet cheeks.

Yu averted his eyes. "Go, little one," he told her, "dress yourself."

It is understandable that a girl might, in Chi's peculiar circumstances, have forgotten how to put on some simple garments. Whatever the truth, Yu H'si Ho was persuaded that it was necessary for him to instruct her in how to dress.

Chi ran into the hut, lithe and bobbing. Yu followed; but not before looking earnestly around him, as if for the last time with innocent eyes.

Inside the hut the light was failing. But there is always light enough for a man to see a maid. Yu's mind, after so much intimacy as was entailed in assisting Chi, was soon in complete confusion. There was the fitting of the soft shoes on to the twirling feet. There was the fastening of this delicately wrought button and of that elusive cord; and the truly difficult assumption of the trousers. A dozen problems of fit and set kept Yu on tenterhooks.

Finally all was done. Chi shook her hair and preened herself; and then leapt at Yu in a very ardent fashion.

Yu sternly repelled her.

"It is time to sleep."

Unwitting words; only to be spoken in such a pass by an inexperienced theologian of tender years.

No sooner had Yu laid himself to rest than Chi, completely naked again, was warming his back.

It was very comfortable.

Yu said to himself, "I will endure this to avoid unpleasantness for one night. Then, in the morning, I will take counsel with myself and dispose of this young woman."

With this absurd resolve he composed himself to sleep.

But a little hand, soft fingers, were plucking at his shoulder as if to induce him to turn himself round. Fretfully, Yu shook off the timid overture. The pleading touch was withdrawn, only to be replaced by the same warm hand tugging lightly at his waist.

Yu spoke within himself again. "Because nothing seems to please her but that I should turn myself towards her, why should I not comply? It is but a girl unlearned in these matters; and doubtless a little chilled without her new clothes."

Unsagacious decision. But how could it be other? In his study of The First Cause Yu had overlooked its effects, the yang and the yin.

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A sound understanding of the Ultimate Ground of Existence is poor protection, poor equipment, in bed, in a remote spot, with a young woman.

Yu's guess that Chi might be feeling cold was, he quickly found, incorrect. Quite an aura of warmth enveloped him when he turned around on the couch and found himself somewhat more than face to face with her.

Hotly embraced, Yu did not know what to do.

Nor did Chi.

But of what immediate concern was that? Daylight was far away; at the other end of the night.

It was years later, soon after the birth of their third son, when Yu H'si Ho broached for the first time with Chi the subject of her first appearance to him.

Chi listened to her lord's musings, about the floating in the air, the white fur. Yu had halted the water buffalo, on whose broad back he held his first son and little second brother. It was the Spring season of Excited Insects. Very high, flecks of cloud edged towards the mountain ranges. To the summit of Yi-lu one cloud hung, fluttering like a paper prayer on an ancestral tomb.

Chi's look of patient puzzlement gave way to affectionate laughter.

"What a whimsical fancy, my lord. What time was there when I was not with you? Of what matter is it? Surely it was a fortunate thing that I came upon you if the pursuit of holiness was giving you such odd illusions."

She looked carelessly up to where the cloud hung askew on the tip of Yi-lu. All up her back, under where her baby drowsed in his sling, upon her belly and down her legs she could feel the pricking as if thousands of invisible hairs were powerfully erected.

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A BED WITHOUT A WOMAN

A bed without a woman
Is a thing of wood and springs, a pit
to roll in with the Devil. But let
Her body touch its length and it becomes
A place of singing wonders, eager springboard
To heaven and higher. And you may join her there
In those hours between sleeping and dawn.

RAYMOND SOUSTER

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TEMPTING TRESSES

Yonder sits a maiden,
The fairest of the fair,
With gold in her garment glittering,
And she combs her golden hair.

HEINE

Claw Setting

He should have got used to his wife by now. Used to her and tired of her, he thought savagely, remembering his old love affairs, and stood still, considering her critically. Then he pulled off her fur cap and threw it away, and rubbed his hands in her hair; it was wonderfully soft and full of little ends; it tangled round his fingers . . .

"I do what I like with you," he said again, and pushed the sleeve back from her arm and ran his hand along it. Then he took off one of his own rings and put it on her middle finger. "That's for you, Erif," he said. Women like to be given things. The ring was too big for her: it was a sun-ring, a topaz in a claw setting, warm from his skin . . .

"I will not be unhappy any more," he repeated, and suddenly picked her up in his arms, picked her right up off the ground and kissed her as if he would never be done. In a little he felt she was kissing him back, her arms were round his neck, soft and strong and straining. He took her into his house. Women like to be given rings.

NAOMI MITCHISON, *The Corn King and the Spring Queen*

Honey Bright

You are as gold
As the half-ripe grain,
As white as the white rain
That beats through
The half-opened flowers
Of the great flower tufts
Thick on the black limbs
Of an Illyrian apple bough.

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Can honey distil such fragrance
As your bright hair—
For your face is as fair as rain,
Yet as rain that lies clear
On white honey-comb,
Lends radiance to the white wax
So your hair on your brow
Casts light for a shadow. H.D., *Song*

The Brush Off

She dressed up again in lilac; lilac to the eyeshadow; as she was standing in her skirt and bra, just about to put on her jacket, there was a knock at the door.

"Who's that?" she said.

"John," was the reply.

"Oh, it's you," she said, dropping the jacket on the back of the chair. "Come in." He came in, and stood in the doorway staring at her . . .

"Hullo," she said, after a moment. "What d'you want?"

"I wanted to know if your case was ready to put in the car."

"Trying to get rid of me?"

"You know I am." He picked up the case and started to go . . . "Wait, wait, I've forgotten to pack my hairbrush. Wait while I do my hair."

And then she took every single pin out of her hair and let it all down, out of its immaculately tidy arrangement, and started to brush it. She brushed it with long, sweeping movements, throwing her head back at the end of each stroke, so that she showed an appalling white expanse of neck and underchin and bosom. He watched her while she did it. When she had finished brushing it she threw me the brush to pack, and started putting it all up again. When she had put it up she put on the jacket of her suit and smiled at him, blinking and sweet. He took the suitcase and went out without a word.

MARGARET DRABBLE, *A Summer Bird-Cage*

Nay but you, who do not love her,
Is she not pure gold, my mistress?
Holds earth aught—speak truth—above her?
Aught like this tress, see, and this tress,
And this last fairest tress of all,
So fair, see, ere I let it fall?

ROBERT BROWNING, *Song*

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When they were all asleep and she was sure they would not call she came in. I loved to take her hair down, and she sat on the bed and kept very still, except suddenly she would dip down to kiss me while I was doing it, and I would take out the pins and lay them on the sheet and it would be loose and I would watch her while she kept very still and then take out the last two pins, and it would all come down and she would drop her head and we would both be inside of it, and it was the feeling of inside a tent or behind a falls.

She had wonderfully beautiful hair and I would lie sometimes and watch her twisting it up in the light that came in the open door, and it shone even in the night as water shines sometimes just before it is really daylight. She had a lovely face and body and lovely smooth skin too. We would be lying together and I would touch her cheeks and her forehead and under her eyes and her chin and throat with the tips of my fingers and say, " Smooth as piano keys."

ERNEST HEMINGWAY, *A Farewell to Arms*

Beware of her fair hair, for she excels
All women in the magic of her locks;
And when she winds them round a young man's neck,
She will not ever set him free again.

GOETHE, *Faust*

Venetian Red

All the women of Venice every Saturday in the afternoone doe use to annoint their haire with oyle, or some other drugs, to the end to make it looke faire, that is whitish. For that colour is most affected of the Venetian Dames and Lasses. And in this manner they do it: first they put on a reeden hat, without any crowne at all, but brimmes of exceeding breadth and largeness: then they sit in some sun-shining place in a chamber or some other secret roome, where having a looking-glasse before them they sophisticate and dye their haire with the foresaid drugs, and after cast it backe round upon the brimmes of the hat, till it be thoroughly dried with the heat of the sunne: and last of all they curle it up in curious locks with a frisling or crisping pinne of iron, the toppe whereof on both sides above their forehead is acuminated in two peakes. That this is true, I know by mine own experience. For it was my chaunce one day when I was in Venice, to stand by an Englishman's wife, who was a Venetian woman borne, while she was thus trimming of her haire: a favour not affoorded to every stranger.

THOMAS CORYAT, *Coryat's Crudities*

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It was crazy . . . he was trying to explain

BEELZEBUB

BY ROBERT BLOCH

HOWARD was still half asleep when he heard the buzzing. It was a faint, persistent drone balanced delicately on the very threshold of consciousness.

For a moment Howard wasn't sure whether the sound came from the sleeping side or the waking side of his mind. He'd heard plenty of strange noises in his sleep lately; made them too. Anita was always complaining about how he'd wake up in the middle of the night, screaming at the top of his lungs. But he had reason to be upset, the way things were going; besides, Anita was always complaining.

The drone deepened insistently and Howard knew he was awake now. He could feel the stale heat of the bedroom and the response his body was making to it—the sluggishness of his limbs and the cold pattern of perspiration forming on them.

Bzzzzzzz. Howard opened his eyes.

The room was dim, but the California sunshine filtering through the smog was also filtering through the interstices of the window-blinds. Just enough to transform the bungalow-court apartment into a small oven with its baking heat. Just enough to give Howard a glimpse of what he didn't want to see—the living-room filled with a fan-shaped clutter of clothing and furniture radiating from the axis of the roll-away bed, the cubby-hole kitchen through the open archway, with the caked and crusted dishes heaped in the sink. Yes, and the damned portable typewriter on the table in the corner, its carriage accusingly empty and its untouched keys leering up like rows of dusty teeth.

Rows of dusty teeth—man, what a writer you are! When you're asleep, that is.

But he wasn't asleep. He could hear that buzzing. Louder now, much louder. Damned fly. How'd it get in here, with all the windows tight shut? Anita had a thing about opening windows, no matter how hot it was, when she had her curlers in. And she always had the curlers—

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Bzzzzzzz.

Howard sat up. The noise was too loud to be coming from the kitchen. It had to be here in the room. He turned and glanced at the huddle in the bed beside him.

The sun glinted off the curlers. A ray played cruelly across Anita's neck, accentuating the stringy fold.

That's where the fly was sitting. At first he thought it was Anita's mole. But moles don't move. Moles don't buzz.

It was a fly, all right. He stared at Anita, thinking how he hated the thing—noisy, rasping at your nerves, always around, demanding attention, intruding on your privacy. Dirty, messy creature, carrying filth—

Somehow his hand had drawn back, and now the fly was coming forward; he wanted to hit it, not too hard, just swat it and destroy it because it had to be destroyed. He had to get rid of it.

Howard wasn't conscious of the blow or its force. Realisation of its impact vanished before the overwhelming explosion of Anita's shrill scream.

"Oh, you brute!" And then she was sitting up, striking at him; not once but again and again, harder and harder, and shrieking louder and louder. "You—you—trying to kill me while I'm asleep—"

It was crazy, she was crazy, and he was trying to explain about the fly . . . he was only going to swat the fly, but she wouldn't listen, she never listened when she got into one of those hysterical rages. She was crying, sobbing, stumbling into the bathroom; of course she locked the door. There was no sense continuing with the same old scene, no sense pounding on the panel and stammering out apologies. All he could do was find his clothes and get dressed, locate his briefcase under the jumble of her clothing. Past nine already, and his appointment was at ten. He had to be there on time.

In his haste, Howard forgot all about the fly. What he had to decide now was whether to spend the next twenty minutes grabbing a cup of coffee at the drugstore on the corner or run down to the barber's for a quick shave. He settled for the shave; it was more important to show up looking presentable.

Luck was with him. He got the car started without any trouble, and shot across to the barber's. There was a vacant chair. Howard settled back in it, grateful for the hot towels that blotted out the sound of the radio and the sight of the autographed photos on the wall. Why was it that every damned barber in this town had to keep the radio howling at full volume, had to disfigure the wall with faded pictures of faded actors?

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And why was it that barbers didn't have enough sense to keep their places clean?

Howard found himself flinging the sheet aside before the barber had finished applying after-shave lotion. "What's the matter with you guys—can't you even keep the lousy flies out of here?"

He hadn't meant to blow up, and come to think of it, there was only one fly buzzing around the ceiling in Howard's range of vision as he lay tilted back in the chair.

But Howard didn't come to think of it until he was out of the shop, until the damage was done. The way that crummy barber had looked at him—

Oh well, he wouldn't be going back there again anyway. There were plenty of other barbers around.

Not so many producers, though. At least not so many who wanted to make a deal with him. Howard reminded himself of that as he drew up at the studio gate. He put a big smile on his face for the guard who directed him to a parking space, and an even bigger smile for Miss Rogers, secretary in the outer office of Trebor Productions. But he saved the biggest smile for Joe Trebor.

That took a little doing. First of all, there was the damned half-hour wait in the outer office. Well, that was Trebor for you. Of course they were all alike, these producers. They all had the same routine. Arrange an appointment, then postpone it. Fix up another, give you the pressure, "How soon can you make it? Tomorrow morning? Good—ten o'clock sharp, in my office. I'll leave a pass at the gate for you."

So you showed up promptly at ten, carrying the briefcase and taking the best possible care of that extra big smile so that it wouldn't crack round the edges. And then you sat there like a damned fool in the reception room, crossing and uncrossing your legs in the uncomfortable little chair, trying not to stare at the secretary as she kept putting calls through to the guy you were supposed to be seeing right now. Sometimes you even sat there while the charm boys finger-snapped their way in and out of the sanctum sanctorum; the sharp young agents, hair just a little too long over the back of the buttondown collar, trousers just a little too tight in the seat, always a little bit ahead of you as they put across their deal—for somebody else.

Howard got into Joe Trebor's office at 10.32. He stayed six minutes.

Three minutes later he was standing in a phone booth, trying to dial Dr. Blanchard's number with a forefinger that wouldn't stop trembling; then interrupting the incoherency he poured

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into the mouthpiece to take a wild swipe at the insect that soared and swooped insanely within the confines of the phone booth.

"It's following me!" he shouted into the mouthpiece. "The damned thing's following me—"

"Do you want to talk about it now?" asked Dr. Blanchard quietly, as Howard sank back into the big leather-covered chair. Scarcely another twenty minutes had elapsed, but Howard was now quite calm. And of course he wanted to talk about it.

That's why he'd telephoned to Blanchard, even though it wasn't his regular appointment day. That's why he'd come running over here to the nice, quiet office where you could sit back and relax and nobody pressured you.

It wasn't like Joe Trebor's office—he was telling the doctor about that now. About the phoney modern paintings on the walls and the big desk with the high executive chair behind it and the low chair in front of it—the one you sat in.

When you sat in that chair the producer looked down on you and you had to look up to him. You looked up over that bare desk which told you here was a man too important to waste his time on mere paperwork the way writers did. You looked at the intercom and the phone with the six extensions which showed just how busy a producer he was; and at the solid-silver water carafe which showed just how wealthy he was. And you looked at the picture of the wife and kids, which was supposed to show you what a solid citizen he was, if you didn't happen to know the stories about the way he auditioned for feminine leads.

But you didn't look directly at Joe Trebor, because he was staring at you. Staring and waiting for you to come up with the story line. You got the notes out of the briefcase and you started to read, all the while conscious that you were just wasting your time with a show boat operator like this, a guy who kept interrupting to make Mickey Mouse suggestions for changes, a guy who didn't understand the values you were aiming for.

All he knew was: "Story line... How do you go out, what's the curtain, you need a tag here... Why don't you change it and play this scene exterior?" Typical fly-by-night producer!

And then the buzzing.

The *buzzing*, just when you were trying to build, trying to sell, trying to nail him down. The *buzzing*, drowning your voice.

And you looked up and saw the fly, perched on the stopper of the silver carafe. It was just squatting there, rubbing its tiny forelegs together, cleansing them. If you put those forelegs under a microscope you'd understand the need for cleansing, because they were covered with filth.

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Then you looked at Joe Trebor, who was smiling and shaking his head and saying, "Sorry, I don't quite see it. You haven't licked the story line yet." And as he said it he rubbed his hands together because they were covered with filth— He'd walked through filth; he left a trail of filth wherever he went, and what right had he to buzz at you? And what right did he have to keep flies in his office to bug you when you were telling your story, your story that you'd sweated over for weeks in that lousy one room apartment like a furnace, with Anita slopping around in her dirty housecoat and whining why didn't you go and get the bread?

Some of this you thought and some of it you must have said because Joe Trebor stood up and he got that look on his face and he was telling you something you couldn't quite hear because of the damned buzzing. So you smiled, holding your lips very tight, not wanting to admit you'd made a mess of it, but you knew. And you shot out and made the phone call to the doctor and there it was—the fly, the same fly, the little black thing with a million eyes that can see everything everywhere, right in the phone booth with you, buzzing and listening. It saw and it heard and it followed you, through all the filth in the world.

Howard knew Dr. Blanchard understood because he was nodding quietly, calm and relaxed, and there was nothing wrong with his eyes. They weren't like Anita's or the barber's or Joe Trebor's eyes, all accusing him of putting it on. And they weren't like the fly's eyes had been either, watching and waiting. Dr. Blanchard really understood.

Now he was asking Howard all about it: when the fly had first appeared, how long ago he could remember being conscious of flies. He even knew that talking about such things made Howard a little nervous, because he was saying, "Don't be afraid. There are no flies here. Just go right ahead and say whatever comes to mind. You won't be interrupted by any buzzing—*buzzing—buzzinnnggg—*"

The buzzing. It was in the room. Howard heard it. He couldn't hear the doctor's voice any more because the buzzing was so loud. He couldn't even hear his own voice shouting, but he knew he was telling the doctor, "You're wrong! It's here—it followed me! Can't you see?"

But, of course, Dr. Blanchard couldn't see. How could he see, when the fly, the black, buzzing fly, was sitting there and buzzing on top of his bald head?

And it buzzed and it stared, and the droning drilled through Howard's skull and the eyes lanced his brain, and he had to run, had to get out of there, had to get away, because they didn't

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believe him, nobody believed him, not even the doctor could help him now . . .

Howard didn't stop running until he got to the car. He was panting when he climbed in, panting and wringing wet with perspiration. He could feel his heart pounding, but he forced himself to be calm. He had to be calm, very calm now, because he knew there was no one else to depend on. He'd have to do it all himself.

The first thing was to check the car very thoroughly, including the back seat. And then, when he was quite sure nothing had got in, to lock the doors. Lock the doors and put up the windows. It was hot inside the car, but he could stand the heat. He could stand anything but the buzzing and the stare.

He started the engine, pulled out. Calm, now. Keep calm. Drive carefully, right up to the clearway. And edge out slowly. Get into the left lane and open up. Now. Drive fast. The faster you drive, the faster you get away from the buzzing and the staring. Keep it at seventy. A fly can't do seventy, can it?

That is, *if the fly is real* . . .

Howard took a deep breath. Suppose there was no fly, except in his own imagination. But it couldn't be; not in his imagination, the one tool, the one weapon, the one area a writer must protect. You can't open up your imagination to a buzzing beast, a creature that crawls through filth, you can't allow the invasion of an insect that incubates in your own insanity, an incarnation of your own personal devil, an evil that torments you incessantly.

But if it *was* that way, then of course there was no escape. He couldn't drive fast enough, run far enough, to get away. And there was no hope for him at all.

Bzzzzzzz.

It was there, in the car. At least, he heard it. But the sound might be coming from inside his own shattering skull.

And now he saw it, fluttering against the windscreen before him, just below the rear-view mirror. Or did he see it? Wasn't it just a fragment of inward vision? How could there be a real fly here in the car, with all the windows closed tight?

But he saw it and he heard it and it buzzed and it crawled, and his sweat poured and his heart thumped and his breath rasped and he knew it was real, it had to be real. And if it was, then this was his chance, his only chance, locked inside the car with it where it couldn't get away.

Howard shifted his foot from the accelerator to the brake. The car was hurtling down an incline but he knew he had it

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in control, everything was under control now. All he needed to do was swat the fly.

The creature had paused in its progress across the windscreen so that it was poised directly before his line of vision. Howard could see it very clearly now, as his hand moved up. He almost laughed at himself as he stared, laughed at his absurd fantasies. Silly to think of demoniac possession by such a tiny, fragile insect; he could see every delicate veining and tracery of its fluttering wings as he leaned forward. For an instant he even stared into its eyes; its multi-faceted eyes, mirrors of myriad mysteries.

In that instant he knew.

But his hand was already swooping out, and all he could do was shriek as the car lurched and the culvert wall loomed—

When the squad car came the fly was resting very quietly on Howard's eyeball.

Its eyes swivelled slowly as the red-necked patrolman bent over the body, pausing just long enough to sense the frustration, the suppressed anger, the seething tension behind the stolid face. Then it rose gracefully and buzzed around the patrolman's shoulders as he straightened. As the man turned away, the fly followed.

The patrolman sighed. " Poor devil," he muttered.

It was, of course, Howard's epitaph.

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TAX REBATE!

As time passed and it became known in the village that I cherished a brood of meal worms, fishermen would come with perforated tins, asking me if I could spare a handful of bait; and thus I became a maggot merchant. But let it be said that in my dealings I have never charged a penny. It would have been a come-down on my Income Tax Return if after " By royalties " I had had to add " By maggots." There would surely have been questions asked.

Soon after I took over the Golden Cockerel Press in 1924 I published Brantôme's *Lives of Gallant Ladies*, and in due course showed on my balance sheet the abbreviated title of the book and its profits; " *By Gallant Ladies*—£220."

The Inspector of Taxes in an early reply requested that I would explain this particular item. It went to my heart to disillusion him.

ROBERT GIBBINGS,
Till I End My Song

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If you throw a blonde at a sheikh, he catches her . . .

NUMBER FOUR

BY STEWART FARRAR

IF EVELYN had arrived on the Wednesday she'd never have met Ibrahim, and that would have saved me a headache.

I'd had everything efficiently arranged; Evelyn was due to catch a 10.30 a.m. plane from Istanbul, arriving at Beirut about noon. I was to meet her, extricate her from any difficulties she'd managed to make for herself in Customs or Immigration, and whisk her off—preferably with all her luggage—to my flat in time for lunch. I'd made a special effort to get up to date with my work, so that, barring an unexpected news break or an awkward cable from my editor in London, Wednesday was clear. Even if an emergency did keep me away, Layla Nosseir—who has no occupation other than looking decorative—had promised to collect Evelyn for me.

It was foolproof. In the light of my sister's letter, I felt it had better be.

I love my step-daughter dearly, she had written from Sydney, *but I warn you Dugald she's a menace in all the ways that made me fall in love with her father. She's determined on this tour and thanks to damfool friends and relations like you I've got her covered for most of it, and I'd have wrung your neck if you'd refused, darling, but be warned . . .*

My sister has the same splendid contempt for precise explanation that she has for punctuation, so I had to make of that what I could.

My Australian brother-in-law was eight years dead, and I'd only met him twice. I remembered a certain charming talent for disorganisation, so I inferred that this was what I had to expect from his daughter—whom I remembered not at all, except as a noisy child whose sole aim was to climb on a horse

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and escape from grown-ups at speed. But that meant nothing, of course. Even I realised that the child of nine offered little clue to the girl of nineteen. So all I could do was to arrange her safe collection and a personal assessment before I suggested any programme for her.

All these neat plans were shattered by my front-door bell at a quarter to seven on the Tuesday evening, just as Ibrahim and I were starting on our second cup of coffee. I asked Ibrahim to excuse me—in Arabic, which is the only language he speaks—and went to open the door.

Something banged me in the chest, kissed me enthusiastically, and cried, "Hullo, Uncle Dugald!"

I regained my balance and looked at it. It was shiny blonde, well equipped for banging people in the chest, and come to that, equipped for enthusiastic kissing.

"I think you'd better be Evelyn," I said. "But how did you get here, for heaven's sake? You're . . ."

Evelyn flung two large white suitcases into my hall, and herself after them. "I know . . . . but I got bored with Istanbul—no, I don't mean that—Istanbul was gorgeous. I mean I got bored with Aunt Freda, or rather that son of hers—he's a drip, he was always in my hair—do you know him?"

"I didn't even know you had an Aunt Freda."

"Well, she isn't really."

"Oh!"

"And I had to escape the drip, so I suddenly decided to catch this afternoon's plane, I don't think Aunt Freda minded, so I did, and I had your address so I didn't have to drag you out, did I—so I got a taxi and here I am."

"You talk the way your step-mother writes."

"Help! I'd better watch it. Uncle Dugald . . ."

I picked up her suitcases and led the way to the spare bedroom, saying over my shoulder, "Look, I'm very glad to see you, but I shan't be if you call me Uncle Dugald. Can you manage in here, do you think? I'm sorry about all the junk, but this flat's my office as well as my home, and things pile up."

"No, it's lovely. All right, I won't call you Uncle Dugald." She was already unpacking. "You're not really old enough, are you? Dugald, then. I'm sorry I haven't got a pet name or anything, but you can make one up if you want to."

"I like Evelyn."

She exploded a smile at me and asked, "The name, or me?"

"Both," I said truthfully.

"After all, we're not even blood relations," she remarked, making it sound interesting. I backed away a little.

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"I'm going to leave you to sort yourself out," I told her. "I've got a guest in the living-room. You see, I didn't expect you today, and . . ."

She clapped an impulsive hand on my arm. "Oh, Dugald, I am sorry. Were you in the middle of seducing someone and I ruined it?"

"I was *not*. What's that sister of mine been saying about me?"

"Mummy's very fond of you," she replied ambiguously.

"Yes, well . . . Anyhow, my guest's a man. You don't speak Arabic, I imagine . . .? Too bad. He speaks nothing else."

"What's his name?"

"Sheikh Ibrahim bin Ahmed. From one of the little Gulf set-ups."

Evelyn's eyes widened a millimetre, then she turned and sat herself in front of the mirror, picking up a brush.

"In that case you'd better go and look after him."

I went back to the living-room, asking myself if I really was sorry my Australian step-niece spoke no Arabic.

Ibrahim was standing by the open doors to the balcony, looking across the roofs at the sea. He faced me courteously as I entered.

"My presence is not convenient," he suggested.

"My house is your house, and your presence is always a matter of joy," I assured him. "Seat yourself again, my friend."

"Your words delight me, but the joys of friendship can be tasted at will; other joys are more capricious, and should be tasted at the moment when Allah offers them."

I grinned. "Allah in His wisdom has not chosen this moment to offer. The voice you have heard is that of my niece, who has travelled far and arrived a day earlier than I had foreseen. She prepares herself to join us, with your permission."

Ibrahim sat down at once, relaxing gracefully. I'm certainly doing Evelyn proud, I thought—showing her a real live Sheikh, the moment she arrives. Young, handsome, and dressed for the part, at that.

"She is the step-daughter of my sister," I went on, pouring more coffee. "The husband of my sister is, alas, dead, leaving no brothers."

"May Allah give him rest," Ibrahim said politely—also generously, the soul in question being that of an infidel. He sat there holding the coffee cup I gave him, and I knew exactly what was going through his mind. Evelyn was tidily pigeon-holed. A widowed sister and her orphaned step-daughter, in the absence of any male relatives on the other side, would be my responsibility, almost my property.

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I always felt prompted to help Ibrahim pigeon-hole things, because away from home he was a little confused.

I'd got to know him quite by accident. I was driving across from Damascus one evening, and I overtook a parked sports car—shiny and new and English. There was something odd about its only occupant, who wore the fine white of a desert aristocrat and sat bolt upright in the driving-seat staring proudly ahead. I drew up in front of him and asked if I could help.

After much exchanging of courtesies I pieced together the facts. Ibrahim bin Ahmed, bound for Beirut, had bought this magnificent little toy in Damascus on a whim, and decided to complete his journey in it. As the owner of nine of his country's fourteen cars, he was an enthusiastic and skilful driver, but of course such chores as checking the water level in the radiator had been far beneath his notice; so it was hardly surprising that, having simply bought the thing, jumped into it, and driven out of Damascus like a bat out of hell, he was now sitting in the hills with a seized-up engine.

I transferred him to my car and took him to Beirut. He never looked back at the ruined sports car, and I don't know if he even bothered to have it picked up. We were both hungry, so I invited him to eat at my flat; he had accepted, and we had been friends ever since. Like many of the Gulf sheikhs, he came to Beirut every now and then to live it up, spending some of his apparently limitless money in the big westernised shops and in the more luxurious of the establishments north of the Bourj. Outside this traditional exercise in conspicuous waste, Beirut bewildered him, with its heathen cosmopolitanism and its unsecluded women; it was as exotic to him as his own little sheikhdom would be to a Surbiton commuter. I think that was one reason why he never came to Beirut without visiting me; if he could not grasp the inner logic of this strange world, it reassured him to have a friend who evidently could.

My flat was the only place where Ibrahim bin Ahmed ever met women on socially equal terms. His third visit to me—unexpected, as always—had been on a day when I'd invited Layla Nosseir and her mother to dinner, and I'd asked him to join us. It must have been a traumatic experience for him, but his natural courtesy and intelligence carried him through. From then on this strange practice of treating women as people obviously began to have for Ibrahim the appeal of an ingenious perversion. To be indulged only, of course, in the privacy of his friend Mackenzie's flat, where he was safe from ridicule.

I found myself wondering what he'd make of Evelyn.

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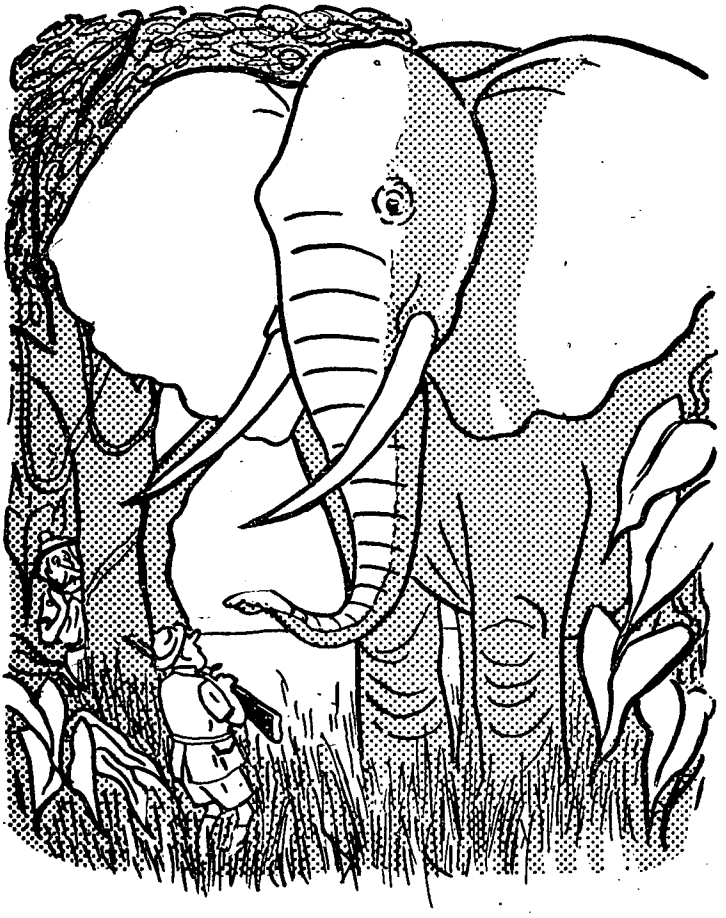

" Remember, he's as much afraid of you as you're afraid of him."

Drawing by O'Brian
© 1964 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

It took her so long to prepare her entrance that Ibrahim and I had got back into the swing of our former conversation, which was theological.

" That the Prophet, on whom be the benediction and blessing of Allah, forbad the drinking of wine by the faithful is, of course, beyond question," he was saying, " and therefore if one drinks

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it, one does so in the knowledge of transgression. However, it is equally beyond question that the Prophet, for all his wisdom, cannot have proscribed that which did not exist while Earth was still blessed with his presence."

"This much is evident," I agreed, opening the whisky bottle.

"For this reason it would reassure me greatly if you, being Scottish, could confirm that the liquor of your people was not invented before the seventh of June, 632, by your calendar."

I handed him a glass. "Do you ask, O Father of Subtlety, in order that you may decide your actions—or in order that you may know whether or not to admit transgression?"

"If you could give me the confirmation I seek, O Father of Hospitality, that embarrassing question would not arise, and . . ."

Ibrahim broke off in mid-sentence, and stood, politely.

I turned—and gasped, impolitely.

"Won't you introduce me, Dugald?" Evelyn asked.

She wore a dull gold cocktail dress which held to her figure like a coat of paint; her hair, which was the same colour but glossy, was swept asymmetrically from right ear to left shoulder. She was a knockout, and her wickedly innocent eyes betrayed that she knew it.

When I'd got my breath back I said, "I shouldn't have told you he was a sheikh," in English; "Allow me to introduce Evelyn Francis, the step-daughter of my sister," in Arabic; and, "Evelyn, this is Sheikh Ibrahim bin Ahmed," in English again.

Evelyn held out a hand with a movement that made you look all along her arm. Ibrahim took it and bowed over it.

"Only the love I bear your uncle restrains me from reproaching him, that he has kept such a niece from my eyes until now," he declared.

"He says, 'Hullo,'" I told Evelyn. "Unfortunately, Ibrahim, my niece speaks only English."

"Then you must interpret my admiration, O Father of Tongues."

"I hesitate to increase her childish conceit," I said, politely belittling a woman of my family, and also meaning it.

"This is no child, my friend. Evelyn Francis—the name means little Eva of the Franks?"

"It does, O Father of Quick Deductions."

"The colour of your people, and the beauty of the mother of us all. Truly, Dugald, this jewel of your house is not Eva, but the fruit of the Tree of Life, at that moment of ripeness whose tasting would be worth the loss of Eden."

"You flatter my house, most generously."

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"What's he saying?" Evelyn asked, arranging herself becomingly on a low stool.

"He was making sure he'd got the name right."

"Make sure he's got the telephone number, too. He's quite a dish, isn't he?"

"Behave yourself, Evelyn, for heaven's sake."

She opened her eyes wide. "There's gratitude! And me leaning over backwards to do you credit . . ."

"With a figure like yours," I told her, "you'd be safer leaning forwards."

"Ignoring that—is he staying to dinner?"

"I had asked him to, yes."

Evelyn rose again, Aphrodite-wise. "In that case, where's your kitchen? I'll rustle something up and leave you boys to talk."

"Back of the hall," I said, relieved. "Shout if there's anything you can't find."

She smiled at Ibrahim, and left.

"Where does she go?" Ibrahim asked anxiously.

"To the kitchen, to her womanly duties."

"Not merely beautiful," he approved, "but capable, also."

If I'd hoped to cut Evelyn down to size, letting her cook was a mistake. She was capable: an alarmingly good cook, with an inexplicable instinct for what an Arab would like. We fed like lords. Ibrahim's delight was so transparent that my role of interpreter-censor grew decidedly tricky. Ibrahim, through his friendship with me, had become quite skilful at mixed-company etiquette, but nothing could have diluted the healthy sensuousness of his flattery. He could modify his social attitude to women, but not his idea of their nature and purpose; it would have been vandalism to try, and in any case I had yet to hear a woman object.

By the end of the meal, Evelyn was purring; I was worried; and Ibrahim, with most of a bottle of knowledge-of-transgression inside him, was in cracking form.

I made Turkish coffee—which Evelyn admitted was beyond her—while she cleared the dishes. After one cup, she excused herself and retired, explaining charmingly that she had had a long day and was very tired. I translated that willingly and verbatim, though I toned down the details of the dreams which Ibrahim wished her.

He and I chatted for an hour or so more, and then he left for his hotel, promising, not to say demanding, that we would see each other again on the Saturday, when he would have finished his Thursday shopping and his Friday devotions . . .

"I fail to understand, Dugald, why you frighten," Layla said.

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I have standing orders to correct Layla's English, but today I was too absorbed to bother with it.

" Of course I frighten," I told her. " Evelyn's a stranger in these parts."

We were prone on the beach below the St Georges, watching Evelyn swim. Trying to keep up with her had worn us out in the first ten minutes, and we'd resigned.

" So? " Layla persisted.

" So Ibrahim's young and rich and handsome, and to an innocent Australian he must look like something out of *The Arabian Nights.* And even though she can't understand a word he's saying, last night he made her feel like the Queen of Sheba, and this morning she can't stop talking about him. And she's been entrusted to my care."

" Innocent? If you think this, it is you who are innocent. Always she knows what she does, Dugald."

" Maybe, but she doesn't know what she's up against. She's counting the hours to Saturday, and she's all set to throw herself at him. What she doesn't understand is that if you throw a blonde at a Gulf sheikh, he catches her."

Layla rolled over and sat up, grinning down on me with affectionate contempt. She dusted some sand off my chest thoughtfully, and said, " Still you frighten without need. One thing: Evelyn knows to take care of herself, in all cases. Two things: you are Ibrahim's friend, and Evelyn is your niece, without father—as you have said, under your care. Sooner he cuts his own throat than betray his friend thus. You who knows so much of Arabs, you could still frighten? "

" Still be frightened," I corrected her, relaxing a little. " Perhaps you're right. I hadn't really thought it out that far."

" Dear Dugald," she said, replacing the sand she had brushed off. " So often you think too short."

But although she was right about Ibrahim's honour, for once it was Layla who had thought too short.

Evelyn may have been counting the hours till Saturday, but she wanted them filled all the same. She insisted on seeing all the shops that mattered; Layla was a big help there. She had to be taken up to the famous cedars. She had to swim at least twice a day. She demanded to see a belly-dancer, and when she found that the belly-dancer was a friend of mine she pestered me to arrange lessons. She had ideas about my flat, and walked me off my feet to find new curtains. In my spare moments I kept up with my normal work—and even that had to be explained to Evelyn in detail.

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By Saturday lunchtime I was exhausted, and very glad I'd invited Layla to join us as moral support.

Ibrahim was punctual, and loaded with presents. For me, a case of Scotch, which he said was to celebrate the information—supplied by the British Embassy press attaché—that liquor distilling was a sixteenth-century innovation. For Layla, whom he could only have guessed might be there, a tiny beautiful Swiss watch. For Evelyn, a necklace.

I saw her hands tremble as she fastened the brilliant thing round her neck, staring dumbly at Ibrahim while she did so.

"That suits you, Evelyn," I told her. "Go and stand by the window, so that it catches the sunlight."

I still didn't realise.

Layla looked at me oddly.

"I think you haven't understood, Dugald," she whispered. "These are diamonds."

"*What?*"

I pulled myself together and went to see. I'm no jeweller, but there wasn't any doubt that Layla was right . . . A case of Scotch, a Swiss watch—from a friend of Ibrahim's wealth, these might have been accepted. But round Evelyn's neck was the price of a Mayfair house.

"Father of Munificence," I said, "you and I must speak together."

"Added to the joy of entering your house, my friend," Ibrahim replied gravely, "it is for this that I have come."

"You girls," I told them, "scram."

"I'm not moving from here," Evelyn declared, sitting down and folding her hands on her lap. She was in the sun and her necklace hurt my eyes.

"Layla, get her out and make her understand."

Layla said, "Evelyn—in Sheikh Ibrahim's world, what is said now is for men."

Evelyn didn't move. "And in my world a girl makes up her own mind if she's going to accept a gift. I'm not going to have you offending Ibrahim."

Ibrahim was watching our faces as we talked, trying to guess what went on. "Evelyn does not wish to be dismissed?" he asked.

"You must forgive her, Ibrahim my friend. My niece has grown up in a far land where ways are strange. She realises that because of the magnificence of your gift I may have to forbid her to accept it, and she fears I may thereby give you offence."

"Then her heart is good, which Allah sees, however strange the ways. Let her stay, and Layla-daughter-of-Yusif also, to

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stand for her mother. And you, my friend, are the man of her house, are you not?"

Now I knew what was coming. I'd been trying not to believe it, but now I knew.

"I am the man of her house," I said.

"Then I ask you for her, as my wife."

"Allah, guide me," I begged. Under my breath, and in English.

The discussion went on and on. Ibrahim was married already, I pointed out. Only to three wives, he explained reasonably, and the Prophet allowed him four.

Evelyn was an infidel, I said. In Surah Four of the Koran, Ibrahim reminded me, the Prophet addressed Christians and Jews as People of the Book; they had strayed, but from a common path; and for a loyal wife the way to Islam was open.

He hardly knew her, I protested. Ibrahim suggested that I look at my niece, and one look would confound the objection.

"What's Ibrahim saying?" Evelyn demanded.

"Wait," Layla told her.

In Evelyn's country, I said—ridiculous as it might seem—one proposed, not to the man of the house, but to the woman herself, and she said yea or nay.

A smile flickered on Ibrahim's face and he said, "Ask her, then."

"Not yet, with your permission. She is young and foolish, and would answer in ignorance."

As I expected, this did not insult him, but merely confirmed his belief that such decisions were properly a matter for men. He nodded.

Another point, I added. Evelyn was not yet twenty-one, and by the custom and law of her land, although she herself had the choice, the consent of parent or guardian was needed . . . This got me into deeper water, of course, because Ibrahim pointed out that her guardian's consent was just what he was seeking; and the fact that not I, but my sister, was the legal guardian was quite outside his comprehension.

"*What's Ibrahim saying?*" Evelyn cried.

"Wait," Layla hushed her. "Dugald's doing fine."

"I wish I had your confidence," I said, and settled down to another ten minutes of argument.

Ibrahim's eyes were growing narrower, and his nostrils wider.

"I think, Dugald Mackenzie," he said at last, "that you are shirking the heart of the matter. I am the Sheikh Ibrahim bin Ahmed, the ruler of my country. I have asked for this woman to wife. She would be rich, she would have many servants,

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she would live like a princess. But she is a Frankish woman, and I am a savage from the desert. Is this not so?"

I heard Layla draw in her breath.

"Ibrahim bin Ahmed," I asked sadly, "can you really believe this of me?"

"I shrink from believing it," Ibrahim said, "but—"

Evelyn stood up.

"I've had enough of this," she said, "and I insist on knowing what the hell goes on."

I looked at her—the responsibility who had been wished on me. I looked at Ibrahim, my wounded friend. I passed the buck.

"Ibrahim wants to marry you," I told her wearily.

"I thought that must be it. And you've been arguing over it all this time?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Because you haven't the faintest idea what it's all about. Because he's got three wives already. Because I'm answerable to my sister for you. Because Ibrahim's my friend, and a good man, and—"

"Translate for me."

"What are you going to say?"

"That's my business—and Ibrahim's."

I glanced at Layla, who shrugged helplessly.

"All right," I said. "I give up. Fire away."

Evelyn stood facing Ibrahim. "Ibrahim bin Ahmed, I am greatly honoured by your offer. I will accept it, if you will honestly answer me one question." She paused. "Go on, Dugald—translate."

I translated. Ibrahim inclined his head gravely.

Evelyn went on. "It says in the Book—in the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful—that you may marry of the women who seem good to you, two, or three, or four. But that if you fear you cannot treat them equally, you shall marry only one—or marry slave girls."

I stumbled with the words, and Layla took over, delivering the rich classical Arabic with a native sureness.

Ibrahim smiled, and replied, "It says further: 'Try as you may, you cannot treat all your wives impartially . . .'"

"And it goes on to say," Evelyn reminded him, "that none the less, you must not set yourself altogether against any of them, leaving her as it were in suspense."

She drew herself to her full height, with a slight writhing movement of her body, shook back her long hair, and spread her hands.

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" Look me in the eyes, Ibrahim bin Ahmed, and tell me honestly that you could treat your three other wives equally with me."

Layla and I waited for each other, and then, diffidently, I interpreted.

Ibrahim looked at Evelyn for a long moment, and shook his head slowly.

" Then I won't endanger your immortal soul by marrying you," Evelyn told him.

Ibrahim threw back his head and shouted with laughter, a sheikh's laugh, fit to echo through a desert place and make the harem tremble.

" Dugald Mackenzie, when does this terrible woman leave your house? "

" One week from next Wednesday, it is arranged."

" Then I dine with you one week from next Thursday. And tell her, I will be honoured if she will keep the necklace as a memento of her refusal."

When Ibrahim had gone, Layla said, " I think I need a little of that Scotch."

I nodded dumbly, and fetched the glasses.

" The trouble with you, Uncle Dugald," Evelyn remarked, patting her necklace, " is that you don't read enough."

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I'D HAVE YOU, QUOTH HE

I'd have you, quoth he,
Wou'd you have me, quoth she,
O where, Sir?

In my Chamber, quoth he,
In your Chamber, quoth she,
Why there, Sir?

To kiss you, quoth he,
To kiss me, quoth she,
O why, Sir?

'Cause I love it, quoth he,
Do you love it? quoth she,
So do I, Sir.

ANON
c. 1670

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A mass of black curls and a flashing smile

DINJO

BY LAWRENCE ADAMS

EVEN apart from Dinjo that Saturday evening would, as they say in Derry, have been out on its own. For one thing, I had a silver threepenny-piece in my pocket; and for another, here I was, still at large in the streets at an hour that was long past my usual bedtime. Both these extraordinary circumstances were due to my Uncle Jim—who had given me the threepence—and his wife Cathleen, who had recently returned to Ireland from America on a holiday and had chosen this particular day to visit us.

I was determined to strain the last drop of enjoyment from every second of that evening. My goal was the railway station. The station was always favourite for a bit of diversion on a Saturday night, what with country people entraining for home after a day's marketing, some of them tipsy and either singing or quarrelling, or both, according to their dispositions. Maybe a flute band, going back after an excursion, would play a selection on the platform before departure. Sometimes passengers would give a tip for having a suitcase carried. Then, of course, there were always the trains. Tonight, however, there was promise of even greater excitements. The gipsies!

All day the biggest single tribe of gipsies that Derry had ever seen had been gathered around the station, providing as much alarm as novelty to the people of the neighbourhood. The gipsy women had been all over the place selling their gaudy imitation flowers and toasting-forks made of twisted wire. There had been fights in the bars and eating-houses of Bridge Street, and Brady, the cattle-buyer, had called in the police over some dispute between him and the gipsies concerning a horse-deal. My brain was a whirlpool of prayers that it might not all be over before I got there, and I wasn't disappointed.

Foyle Road, the canal quay, and the station forecourt were now transformed into an exhilarating scene compounded of unfamiliar colours and sounds and smells—a montage of horses

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Illustration by Biro

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and harness and dogs and children, carts and gigs of every size, and caravans—painted in reds and greens and yellows, covered in all sorts of designs, devices and friezes—gaudy, garish, insanitary, and all of them magnificent. Completely unabashed by the groups of onlooking townsfolk, the gipsies cooked their meals, tended the horses or engaged in conversations shouted from one vehicle to another, while a steady stream of them flowed in each direction between the station and the pubs in Bridge Street.

I lost no time in getting into the middle of it all, climbing on carts, running under ponies' bellies, listening to the strange speech and accents. A young man holding a rusty old curved knife was telling some others how he had found it among scrap iron which he had collected and sold.

"Would it have been a soldier's weapon, do you think?" asked one of them.

"No," said the young man, after due thought, "it is more like what the skipper of a large vessel would have, and if there was trouble on board and he had no more shots in his revolver, he would draw it and stick it in you and just rip you up."

As he said this, he turned to me and made a sudden upward gesture with the knife, and the others laughed as I jumped back in fright. To hide my red embarrassment I turned from them and joined a group of townsmen gathered round a gipsy and his dog.

"I wouldn't part with her if you were to make me king of all Ireland," the gipsy was saying as I drew near. "Just watch this now. Macha!"

At the sound of its name, the snuff-coloured little mongrel looked up.

"Macha, go down now and bring me back my old pipe."

Off went the dog and into a caravan, and brought the gipsy back an old clay pipe. Everyone expressed amazement at this performance, and the gipsy then put the animal through a series of tricks—sitting up, begging, jumping, lying down and rolling over on command.

"That wee creature is as wise as a Christian," said the owner. "She knows every word you say." He turned again to the dog. "Now sit down here, Macha," he ordered, "and don't move from here until I call you." The dog sat down and looked up at him with big, lovely eyes as if he were the only other living thing on the earth. "Let us come away now and watch what she will do."

The gipsy led the other men away across the main road and up the slope to Bridge Street. The dog never took its gaze from them or moved an inch. I wondered if it could still see them,

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for I myself could hardly make them out from the other passers-by. They stopped outside the Boston Bar and I saw the gipsy put a hand to his mouth, but I didn't hear a whistle or a shout. Nevertheless the dog was up and away, though the men were in the pub before it got there. It was the most wonderful dog I had ever seen, and I wished with an intensity that was rare and disturbing to me that it were mine.

Nearby, the leader of the tribe was having a rough interview with no less than the District Inspector of Police. The Inspector, it seemed, had ordered the gipsies out of the city after Brady, the cattle-buyer, had got his money back from the horse-deal. The gipsy chief was busy explaining that the delay was forced on him because one of their women had not yet returned and he had men out looking for her.

While he was begging the Law's indulgence until she could be found, I took the opportunity to slip past them and through a wicket-gate on to the quay before the District Inspector could see me.

There, in a sheltered angle formed by the main wharf and a huge shed that jutted out over the river on its own apron, floated a small shoal of row-boats moored three or four abreast. One of these belonged to my father. Some gipsy boys were swarming over them, leaping from one boat to another and pulling them to and fro as far as the slack of the mooring-ropes would allow.

Standing there in my snug-fitting woollen jersey and grey flannel trousers I was filled with a bewildering envy as I watched them. They were dressed in dirty, unbuttoned shirts and cut-down trousers that reached below their knees and were either baggy or skin-tight, and where these poor garments were ripped and holed you could see that they wore nothing underneath. Yet they leapt and jumped about, fearless and free and yet secure in some way which I was not.

One of them, more daring and nimble than the others, was obviously regarded as their leader. They called him Dinjo. I could see his handsome young face and his mass of blackest curls and the white flash of his smile as he leapt from prow to prow out to the farthest boat, daring the others to follow him.

I was overwhelmed by a complex of emotion towards this boy creature; a strange mixture of anger and admiration and jealousy that quickly built up an alarming pressure inside me. It was all too much to take. Before I could think to stop myself, I cried out in a choking voice, " Clear off, the pack of you! What the hell do you think you're doing? Clear off before I get the police. My father owns these boats! "

I soon regretted my outburst. Before the words were right out,

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the gipsy boys were up on the wharf and had me pinned against the wall of the shed. Their hard little fists came at me from all directions. Down I went on the wharf, blubbering, and lay there trying to shield my face from their blows.

Only gradually did I realise that they had stopped hitting me and that someone was trying to get me to my feet. I cautiously peered up and saw that it was Dinjo. At his word the others made off. By the time I got up there was nobody there save the two of us.

" There now," he was saying, " no more crying. It's no way for a fine big fellow like you to be going on. How old are you? "

He looked as if he might have been any age between ten and fifteen.

" Nine, going on ten," I told him, adding a year to the truth.

" Where's your kerchief? " he asked. He promptly put a hand into my trousers pocket and his fingers touched the threepenny-piece. I knew that he realised what it was, but he didn't say anything.

He transferred his hand to my other pocket, took out my handkerchief, and wiped away my tears.

" Never mind the others," he said. " You and me will be the best of pals."

I could only nod dumbly as he led me away by the hand.

Back in Foyle Road, we stopped at a fine high cart with rubber-tyred wheels and a nice piebald pony between the shafts. The cart was nearly full of green hay, and Dinjo had me get up and reach him down an armful of it, which he gave to the piebald. There was no nosebag. The pony just stretched down and ate the hay off the pavement. While the hay was being consumed, Dinjo joined me on the thin plank that served as the driver's seat.

" Is the pony yours? " I asked him.

" She is, surely. Indeed she is. She is my own lovely Dolly and she is the best wee pony in the whole of the four provinces."

Dinjo said this more to the pony than to me, and her sharp ears pricked up at the sound of his voice. Still murmuring endearments, he crawled out on the animal's back and lay with the side of his face pillowed on the dusty mane. She gave a quiet little snort of pleasure. My heart almost burst with feeling for him and with gratitude for the luck that had placed me in his company.

" I always give her a mouthful of hay about now," he said, getting back on the seat. " She's not supposed to get a feed at all at this time, but I think she's maybe hungry. I am always

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hungry myself at this time of evening, but I know I won't get any food until the morrow."

I had an idea where this was leading, so I said nothing.

"If only we had a penny, I know a shop where we could buy two buns with sugar on them," he went on. "I don't suppose you'd have one, would you?"

A lie would have been useless. "I have a threepenny-piece that my uncle from America gave me," I told him, "but I daren't spend it or my mother would kill me."

"But if we bought the buns you would still have two whole pennies left, and I do be very hungry because we don't get much to eat," he said.

"No," I said.

"Come on, now, just one little penny." He used the same tone as when he had talked to the pony.

I shook my head. It wasn't that I was mean, nor was I worried about getting a beating at home, because I was going to get one anyway. I was afraid that if I gave him the money he would have no further use for me.

His eyes went on pleading with me, but I didn't soften. Suddenly he laughed and threw himself off the seat, landing on his back in the soft, springy hay. The crisis was over. I allowed myself to fall backwards too, and, not knowing what impact to expect, got a harder jolt than I had bargained for.

Dinjo got great fun at my having the wind knocked out of me, and we lay there facing each other, he laughing away and me trying to get my breath back.

"We could be great friends altogether," he said. "Close friends, you and me."

Yes, I wanted to tell him . . . Yes, Dinjo, we'll be friends. I'll go with you in the caravan. My body will grow straight like yours, and hard as rock and fluid as oil and shiny and brown like a russet apple. We'll travel strange roads and camp beside new rivers and see faraway towns. I'll learn to talk to ponies. And we'll be friends forever, Dinjo. Just the two of us . . .

But such thoughts were too bewildering, and tumbled through my mind too quickly for me to trap them in a network of spoken words.

"What are you doing there, Dinjo?" The rough voice cut cruelly across the moment and, looking up, I saw that the speaker was the owner of Macha, the dog as wise as a Christian.

Dinjo pushed me aside and sat up. "Nothing, Daddo. Nothing at all."

"Well, then, let nothing be it. If you've taken anything from him, give it back. There has been trouble enough." The man's

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Lawrence Adams is an Irishman, born in Derry City—the setting of this story. An expatriate, like many of his countrymen, he now lives in England. Among his interests are photography, good music, reading, and nostalgia for the sights and sounds and smells of Derry thirty years back. His greatest wish is to work in films—particularly Irish films.

breath was heavy with the smell of drink. "And, here, keep a tight eye on the bitch. I think she's on heat."

Lifting Macha from the ground, he put her in the cart beside us and off he went again. The dog began jumping up on Dinjo and trying to lick his face.

"Does Macha belong to you as well?" I asked astounded.

"She does."

"And that man, is he your father?"

"I don't know. It is likely he is."

Even at that time I found this casual reply very intriguing, but before I could question him further Dinjo had jumped down from the cart, taking the dog with him, and I followed quickly in case I should lose him.

That Saturday evening with Dinjo was one of the longest and loveliest I have ever lived. We moved, completely at liberty, up and down the line of caravans. Dinjo was very welcome everywhere, and it was plain that he had a way with him that worked on everyone—men, women, and animals. In his company I was freely accepted among them.

Dinjo showed me how they twisted the wire into toasting-forks, and I saw the girls making the flowers from coloured papers and watched the men soldering teacans and saucepans. It was all strange and exciting, the strangest excitement of all being that I was actually part of it. Even Macha, the dog, would sometimes respond to a simple command from me. My attachment for Dinjo strengthened by the minute as I watched his great popularity and endless abilities. In all this time Dinjo never mentioned the threepenny-piece.

Across the river where the houses rose in tiers up the side of Corrody Hill, their windows were changed by the westering sun into squares of gold which they, in turn, reflected on the water as long, wavy stripes of coppery pink. I knew that it would be some time yet before the eerie reflections of the quayside gas lamps would replace those coppery stripes, and even longer before the moon would rise from behind Corrody to change the

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windows on our side into silver. Nevertheless, pushed down at the back of my mind was the unbearable knowledge that before night fell the caravans would leave Derry, and among them would be the high cart with the rubber tyres taking Dinjo away from me.

Presently there was a commotion round by the station forecourt. The woman whose absence had held up the caravans' departure had been brought back after having been found in a public-house, where she had been providing great entertainment, telling fortunes and one thing and another. She seemed to be very drunk and was making a terrible row, but I could see that a lot of it was just put on.

The chief gipsy quietly took charge and put her before him into a caravan, and to judge from the screams that came from it he must have given her one hell of a beating. It appeared that she was one of his wives, and if she hadn't been missing they could all have been away without giving Brady back his money.

Soon after that they began to move off. The chief's caravan led the way down Foyle Road and round the bend under the bridge. The others began to pull out, one here and one there along the line. They seemed to be following some order of precedence, and as Dinjo didn't appear in any hurry I guessed that he would be among the last to take to the road.

I don't remember what he did during those last ten minutes. I can only recall the way the scalding grief began to rise in me at the thought of his leaving, and how I sought to quell it by making my breath come and go in great aching sighs.

"Well, I will have to be going now." He said this quite casually, then he softened a little and added, "I wish you could come with us. Would you like that?"

I didn't know what to answer, and even if I had I couldn't have got the words past the lump that was expanding in my throat. I went down on one knee and fondled the dog, keeping my head low so that he wouldn't see how close I was to tears. Somehow I was aware that the piebald pony and high cart were pulling out into the road.

"We'll have to say good-bye to him now, won't we, Macha?"

As Dinjo spoke her name, the dog put her forepaws up on him and he gathered her into his arms. I was still too abashed to look at him, and concentrated on stroking the animal. He hasn't even asked me my name, I thought bitterly.

"You would like to keep Macha, wouldn't you?" he said.

It was easier to nod my head than to try to express what was burning in my mind.

"I'll tell you what I'll do then. I'll sell Macha to you for threepence."

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Slowly, I pulled out the coin and looked at it. A tiny silver disc, barely a quarter of an inch across, bearing in marvellous detail the bearded profile of the English monarch surrounded by all his kingly and imperial titles inscribed in Latin, and worth goodness only knew how many brandy balls and caramels and bulls-eyes and treacle toffees, in endless combinations and permutations.

"Dinjo! Are you coming, Dinjo?" The shout came from the man on the high cart.

"I'm coming now," Dinjo called back. Then he turned again to me. "Well, what are you for doing?" he asked.

I held out the threepenny-bit. By a rapid piece of legerdemain the little coin vanished and Macha was placed in my arms.

Then Dinjo was off down the road. I hadn't a chance to speak to him or even touch him again.

"Good-bye," he called back over his shoulder. "I'm sorry to be leaving you."

I didn't know whether he meant myself or the dog.

It took him only a minute to overtake the cart and climb on to it. He stood up facing me while the tarred roadway between us lengthened with every turn of the humming rubber-tyred wheels. The thick, buttery light of the setting sun outlined him as a silhouette of smoky bluish bronze, making his sturdy form look like a statue of some young pagan god. I felt a need for weeping, but no tears came.

Halfway to the bridge he suddenly raised his fingers to his lips and gave a double whistle. Immediately the dog sprang from my arms and streaked off down the road after him.

It took only a second for me to realise what had happened, and then, I think, I laughed at the roguery of it. Anyway, I didn't feel that I had been cheated or fooled. I felt, instead, that I would have given Dinjo all I had, dog, threepenny-piece, or anything else that he might have wanted from me, willingly and gladly, in gratitude for our brief friendship.

This was a new way for me to view things, and it came to me that my whole outlook had somehow widened and changed. I was no longer the child to whom Uncle Jim had given a silver threepenny-piece. I was now a boy on the way to becoming a man.

Macha had caught up with the cart and leapt up beside Dinjo. I raised my hand in farewell, and the diminishing figure of Dinjo answered with a slow, grave wave of the arm. Then they swept into the shadow of the bridge and round the corner and were gone—like everything else about those days—for good.

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Another little problem on his hands . . .

ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT

BY E. L. MALPASS

GOT MOTOR oil in his veins, that Morgan the Garage, I shouldn't wonder. Used it for hair oil, too, and for washing his shirts, by the look of things.

Difficult to imagine what Morgan would have done had he been born before the internal combustion engine. Invented it, probably, out of sheer desperation. For the motor car, in sickness and health, was his life. By day he was a pair of feet sticking out from under one, or a bedenimed ostrich burying his head in the bonnet. When he slept, he dreamt of cylinder heads and sumps. And when he couldn't sleep he tried counting motors going up the M.1.

But Morgan had one deep sorrow. Dinas was not motor car-conscious. Too many of the citizens relied on horses, bicycles, or even feet for getting from point A to point B. And those who were car-minded clung, with misplaced affection, to things like Model T Fords; whereas in Morgan's vision of the New Jerusalem every family had a sleek, shiny, 1964 limousine.

In an effort to stimulate interest, he formed the Dinas Automobile Club, with a view to organising races, rallies, treasure hunts. With some hope of success, too.

The first midnight rally, for instance, went like a bomb. It was unanimously decided to hold one every Saturday night.

A gentle thing, sleep. Took it very serious did Evans the Highways, rightly regarding it as one of the few activities he could indulge in without affecting either his waistline or his guilt complex. Always had his eight hours. And so, he hoped, he always would, until they tucked him tidy in his little black box, and shut him in his last, soundproof bedchamber.

In his pleasant house in Dinas Road, Llangrwl, he drank his nightly beaker of Sleepytyme, laid his head on the pillow, and

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was soon asleep, happy in the knowledge that tomorrow was Sunday and that hours of undisturbed rest lay before him.

But what was this dreadful noise that came upon the midnight clear? The grinding of an engine up the steep road to Llangrwl. It faded into the distance. Evans sank back into sleep. Ten minutes later the noise came again. And again. Lights journeyed round the bedroom walls and were gone. Evans, wide awake now, ran to the window. Up the hill the cars were toiling. Far away, down in the valley, he could see their advancing lights. Scores of them, it seemed. Where could they be going? This road, after leaving Llangrwl, lost itself in the mountains. What possible disaster was forcing the people of Dinas to flee to the hills? Very concerned, Evans was. Very concerned, indeed.

Still, he reflected more calmly, whatever the nature of the disaster it did not seem to have affected Llangrwl; and with this comforting thought he went back to bed. But he could not sleep. Every time he was on the point of dropping off another car would come and rouse him. Very aggrieved, Evans became. Disaster or no disaster, they had no business disturbing his sleep in this way. Plenty of other hills to flee to, weren't there?

Trevor Davies slept, as he did everything else, with gusto. Oh, a powerful sleeper, that one. Threshed and kicked and grunted and growled in his slumbers; putting more work into a good night's sleep, the late Mrs. Davies used to say, than most men put into a day's labour. And over at Pen y Graig, far out on the lonely hill road, there was usually no sound but the wind to disturb that sleep.

But there was tonight, by damn. Car after blasted car. At the tenth Davies could stand it no longer. He leapt out of bed, seized his double-barrelled shotgun, ran to the window and put a warning shot across the car's bows. The car stopped sudden.

The driver got out, inspected his tyres, shrugged, climbed in again. Davies let him have the other barrel, just for the hell of it. Then, smiling grimly, he went back to bed.

Chapel the next morning, and Trevor Davies, squat and four-square, singing *Rock of Ages* and looking like it; and Evans the Highways, dark rings under his eyes, sleeping solid through the sermon; and Griffiths Mortimer, Chairman of the Llangrwl Urban District Council, stroking his silky white beard and smiling enigmatic. But after Chapel: "Oh, what a carry on, Mr. Evans! Didn't get a wink of sleep, my Idwal and me."

"What you going to do about it, Mr. Mortimer? Complain to the Government, is it?"

And Evans, very grandiloquent, "Wonder what calamity can have befallen the good people of Dinas?"

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Silence at that. Then, " Calamity, did you say, Mr. Evans? Oh, there is terrible."

Pondered, they did. " Dinas mountain sprouted itself into a volcano, maybe? " suggested Mrs. Pugh.

Evans shook his head. " Should have seen the sparks from Llangrwl," he pointed out. He pursed his lips sagely. " Inundation more likely, in my humble opinion. Never did trust those old dams."

Inundation in Dinas! Well, there was something to chew on before Sunday dinner. Llangrwl felt as the righteous must have felt when the first news trickled through about Sodom and Gomorrah.

But Griffiths Mortimer said, " Overdramatising the situation, you are, Mr. Evans. What disturbed you last night was not catastrophe. It was the first rally of the newly formed Dinas Automobile Club." He was still smiling; but Griffiths Mortimer's smile was like sun glinting on ice. " I understand they are to hold one a week during the summer months."

Horrified, his hearers were. " Haggard the citizens will be through lack of sleep," wailed Evans the Highways.

Trevor Davies swung himself into the saddle. " Oh, pepper their tyres, I will," he roared. " *And* their backsides." He sat his charger, thirsting for battle.

But Mortimer said gently, " An Extraordinary Meeting of the Council is called for tomorrow evening. There you will all get your instructions." He climbed into his pony trap.

" Got to do something urgent, Mr. Mortimer," pleaded the unhappy Evans. " Like a piece of chewed string I am already, after only one night."

Mortimer flicked his whip. " Something will be done, Mr. Evans, though it will be more subtle than a double-barrelled shotgun, I am thinking. And now, let us return to our homes, and cogitate on this morning's sermon." He departed in an aura of black serge and piety . . .

Spent the following week on the crest of the wave, did Morgan the Garage. Enjoyed by one and all, the rally had been. And already he had had two inquiries for second-hand cars from confirmed members of the Dinas Cycling Club, and a bumper entry for next Saturday's rally.

But little did he know that the Llangrwl Urban District Council had sat late into the Monday night. Had he seen those dark, midnight faces whispering low over the table; had he seen black eyes flickering to left and right, quick and meaningful; had he seen Evans, Chairman of the Highways Committee, swallowing pills by the dozen to keep him wakeful as he laid

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his plans; had he seen Eli the Locomotive brought in for a whispered conclave; and not only Eli; Davies of Pen y Graig Farm, Williams from Tal y Bont; and P.C. Protheroe. Oh, a scourge of all evil-doers was P.C. Protheroe. But especially of evil-doers in motor cars. Had Morgan seen all these things he might have felt less happy.

Griffiths Mortimer was speaking. "And you are sure you can get these things, Mr. Evans?"

"Yes, indeed," said Evans the Highways. "May cause a little confusion on the A.5, of course. But not our worry, is it?"

There were growls of assent. Apart from the rallies, Llangrwl hadn't quite forgiven Dinas for not being inundated. The natural distrust that one Welsh town feels for its neighbour had been exacerbated. Dinas must be taught a sharp lesson.

A pony trap was coming fast down Dinas High Street. Looked at it more in sorrow than in anger, did Morgan the Garage. It saddened him that anyone, in the motor car age, could still cling to a form of transport that relied on nothing but a bag of oats.

Then, to his astonishment, the equipage turned into his garage. There were three men aboard. He knew them all. Griffiths Mortimer, Trevor Davies, Evans the Highways. A sudden hope flared. Could Griffiths Mortimer be coming to buy a car? If so, it was the end of the horse in these parts. For horses were to Griffiths what cars were to Morgan. He bought them, sold them, hired them out, cared for them, loved them.

But his hopes were soon dashed. "A bucket of water, Mr. Morgan," called Griffiths.

"Yes, Mr. Mortimer." He went and fetched one, and stood looking at the pony. Nonplussed, he was.

But not for long. "Put it down in front of her and let her drink, man," shouted Trevor Davies. "Don't have to unscrew her and pour it in, dammit."

Morgan put the bucket down. The horse drank. But now the three gentlemen descended and peered into the showroom window. Morgan's hopes rose again. He hurried after them.

"That is a very nice model, Mr. Mortimer. And only twelve hundred pounds." He laughed nervously. "Give you a trial run any time you like."

"Free of charge?" asked Mortimer in his quiet, musing voice.

"Oh, yes, indeed. A pleasure, it would be."

"Well, there is generous," cried Trevor Davies. "A free jaunt round the locality that Tommos the Taxi would charge five pounds for."

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To Morgan's delight Griffiths Mortimer had already pulled a slim diary from his pocket. He thumbed the fine pages. "Dear me, Mr. Morgan. I find that my only free time is late on Saturday evening. Would that be convenient to you?"

"Oh, there is unfortunate." Distressed in the extreme, Morgan was. "Organising a rally I am on Saturday."

Mortimer looked both surprised and disappointed. Then hit upon a happy solution.

"Why not kill two birds with one stone? Take me with you on the rally?"

It was indeed a happy solution. "Of course, Mr. Mortimer. Take Mr. Davies and Mr. Evans too if they would care to come," Morgan said courteously.

"Long past my bedtime," Evans began, but he was silenced by a sharp kick on the shin from Trevor Davies. Mr. Mortimer said, with a gracious bow, "That is very kind of you, Mr. Morgan. We meet at—Philippi, then?"

"Oh, no need for that, Mr. Mortimer. Pick you all up at your homes," Morgan said hurriedly. The three gentlemen returned to their equipage.

When they had gone, Morgan the Garage danced a little jig. The poor fool . . .

Very picturesque, the road from Dinas through Llangrwl to the mountains. Down in the valley at first, and it and the stream and the railway crossing and recrossing each other like a tangled skein of wool. Bridges from which you could watch the trout and the tumbling stream, or the white bright rails and the train curving and worming through the crowding firs. Level crossings where Eli, with a contemptuous whistle, would hurtle past the waiting motorists. A snaking, lovely, leisurely road that then began to climb until, by the time it reached Llangrwl, it was developing stretches of 1 in 6 and some interesting hairpin bends. Up through Llangrwl it went, with the corners of chapels and pubs sticking out into the fairway like bony elbows. Then, after Llangrwl, it threw off its metalled surface and went back to its wild state, and for mile after mile it wandered unkempt through the mountains like a poor beggar woman.

This was the road that Morgan took out of Dinas on that fateful Saturday night. Beside him, tall and elegant in the subdued light of the dashboard, was Griffiths Mortimer. On the back seat Evans struggled to keep awake, while Trevor Davies, hands clasping his trunk-like knees, crouched and peered like something by Epstein.

Smooth and swift the car ran; but to Morgan's disappointment none of the passengers seemed to notice. In fact, they

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were a little critical. "More room for the legs in the pony trap," Mr. Mortimer said thoughtfully.

"Damn' cramped if you ask me," grumbled Trevor Davies. "Be lucky if you got more than a couple of pigs in the back here."

This was more than Morgan could stomach. "It isn't made for pigs, Mr. Davies," he said tartly.

"No good buying a contraption you can't carry pigs in, and that is flat," Mr. Davies said.

Morgan's heart sank. Here they were, in the sleekest and most luxurious of cars, and all they could think about was leg-room and pigs. But he was suddenly aware that Trevor Davies had spoken.

"And how long to get from Dinas Market place to my farm in this contraption, Mr. Morgan?"

"Fifteen minutes," said Morgan, wishing they wouldn't call this lovely thing a contraption. It hurt.

"Damn and devils, man. Impossible. Takes me two hours in my trap, and Betsi the fastest pony in Merioneth."

"Right, I'll show you." To hell with the rally. Morgan had been stung in his tenderest feelings.

Trevor Davies pulled out his watch. "Get me home in fifteen minutes from now and I will buy the thing. And give you Betsi and the trap in part exchange."

"Done," said Morgan. He put his foot down. It was money for jam.

"Shouldn't you stop for the crossing gates?" Mr. Mortimer asked softly.

"Blast," said Morgan, stopping about six inches from the red light on the crossing gates. "Wonderful brakes," he pointed out, with more confidence than he felt. This was going to upset his schedule.

But the train was already towering over them. "Not had to wait long, anyway," he said with relief.

Short-lived, his optimism was. The train ground to a halt, and subsided across his path, simmering gently.

Morgan stood it for about fifteen seconds. Then he put his hand on the horn and kept it there.

A huge, bearded figure descended from the engine, and came and leaned conversationally on the crossing gates. "Getting impatient, is it?" asked Eli the Locomotive in friendly tones.

"Get out of my way, dammit," shouted Morgan.

Eli lit his pipe. "Can't do that, good boy. Pulled the communication cord, one of the passengers has."

"Well, go and see what the trouble is."

"Not my job. Willie the Guard's department, that is."

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" You'll laugh when I tell you what they offered for the car."

Precious, precious moments were passing. " Tell him to get a move on, then."

Eli scratched his beard with the stem of his pipe. " Depends on the nature of the interruption. Might be a long job. Judging by the look of her when she boarded the train, could be Jenny Prosser having her fourth under the ægis of British Railways."

Fortunately, however, this was not the case; for at that moment a cheerful head appeared at one of the windows, and a cheerful voice cried, " Take her away, Eli boy. Only an improper use, and another five pounds to gladden the heart of the good Doctor."

Eli returned to his cab. The train lumbered off. Wires jerked among the midnight firs. The gates opened.

Morgan shot through like an arrow from a bow. " Wonderful acceleration," he pointed out, again with more confidence than he felt. Five whole minutes had been wasted.

" Can't beat my Betsi for acceleration," said Trevor. " From a saunter to a gallop at one crack of the whip."

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"She can't do ninety-five," said Morgan contemptuously.

"Can you?"

"Yes. On a straight road."

"Ah. But where are you going to find a straight road hereabouts?" asked Griffiths Mortimer.

"Just you watch," said Morgan. The needle flickered up. Fifty-five. Sixty. Sixty-five. ROAD WORKS AHEAD said a notice. Now what? thought Morgan miserably. Already notices were springing up like flowers in May. DANGER. MUD ON ROADS. HEAVY PLANT CROSSING. And then an uncompromising DEAD SLOW.

Obediently Morgan dropped to forty-five. As well as being exasperated he was puzzled. Judging by the build-up, nothing less than a motorway was coming through here. Yet nothing of the sort was scheduled. He couldn't understand it. But then he came to a notice that drove all such speculation from his mind—TRAFFIC LIGHTS AHEAD—"I bet they'll be at red," he muttered.

They were.

They were the small, portable, do-it-yourself type that roadmen use. Morgan stopped.

On the back seat Trevor Davies shifted his bulk. "Reckon we should have been a damn sight quicker with Betsi," he grumbled.

Griffiths Mortimer said in a disappointed voice, "Seems to me there are an awful lot of hold-ups for the modern motorist, Mr. Morgan."

"Well, even your blasted Betsi has to stop for traffic lights and level crossings, I imagine."

"Oh, but different, that is." Mr. Mortimer sounded shocked. "Gives Betsi a chance to relax her nervous tension and restore her energies by cropping the grass verge."

Morgan wished something would relax his nervous tensions. "Those damn lights must have stuck," he cried. He'd been there a good three minutes already.

"Only got five minutes to get to Pen y Graig," Trevor Davies said with satisfaction.

Morgan found himself praying. In five minutes he could just do it, if the lights would change. But the lights stayed red.

They *must* have stuck. Well, the road was empty. Morgan moved forward.

He didn't go far. A large figure barred his path, then came round to the driver's window. "Well, what's all this?" asked P.C. Protheroe, very jocular. "Colour blind, is it?"

"No, I'm not colour blind. Those lights had stuck on red."

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"Oh, there is unfortunate." Very sympathetic, the constable sounded. "Still, no reason for contravening the regulations, is it?" he said briskly, taking out his notebook.

Morgan groaned. "You could not expect me to sit here all night," he said wretchedly.

"Only your word for it that they were stuck," said Protheroe.

"Well, go and see for yourself. You'll find they're red all right."

The officer strolled back down the road. He returned. "Green as grass, boyo," he said cheerfully. "Now . . . ".

Forty-five minutes later they reached Pen y Graig Farm. After a prolonged struggle Trevor Davies extricated himself from the car, rather like a moth leaving a chrysalis. Griffiths Mortimer also got out. Together they woke Evans.

"Coming in for a drink, is it?" asked Trevor.

"No, thank you, Mr. Davies." All Morgan wanted to do was to get back to the garage and forget.

"Take you home in the trap if you like," said Trevor. "Might be quicker in the long run."

Drove off without a word, did Morgan. To think that he'd abandoned the rally, and got himself pinched, just for those three survivals from the horse age. It wouldn't surprise him, he thought, if they never intended to buy a car in the first place. Well, he'd just have to cut his losses and concentrate on the rally, now. He took the road into the hills.

But the hill road was empty under the stars. Morgan couldn't understand it. By now it should have been alive with eager ralliers. Anxiously he drove back to Dinas . . .

The telephone was ringing in his office. He hurried inside, lifted the receiver. He heard the plaintive voice of his friend Owen Rhys. "Oh, Mr. Morgan. Can you come up to Llangrwl? Punctured, I am." Tired and discouraged, Morgan was.

"But you do not need me to change a wheel, Owen boy."

"'Tisn't a case of changing a wheel. Got four punctures—simultaneous."

"Four!" Morgan groaned. "All right. I will come as soon as possible." Wearily he put down the receiver.

Immediately the telephone rang again. "That you, Morgan?"

"Yes, Mr. Llewellyn-Pugh—" Morgan recognised the bark.

"Where the devil were you? In bed?"

"No, I—"

"I thought you were supposed to be in charge of this rally, not skulking in your office. You'd better get up to Llangrwl as fast as you can and sort things out. *If* you can—"

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Well, there was ominous. Morgan took the Llangrwl road with an uneasy feeling in the pit of his stomach. And this time, he told himself, he'd watch those traffic lights.

But they had gone. So had the warning notices, every one. The sense of nightmare that had affected Morgan all evening was heightened. But he pressed on, and came to Llangrwl.

The first thing he saw was a yellow DIVERSION notice. He turned left. And came to another, left again. And another.

Morgan began to feel dizzy. This last notice had sent him down a narrow winding lane between high buildings, a lane just wide enough to take his car. And then he found his way blocked by an abandoned steam roller; and, beyond the steam roller, lights, commotion, uproar . . .

Morgan had a premonition of disaster. He left his car, and squeezed past the steam roller.

And there he found his lost rally.

Turned on him bitter, they did. One by one they had followed the DIVERSION signs into what proved to be a narrow cul-de-sac; paved, it appeared, with broken glass. And by the time the unpunctured ones had gathered their wits sufficiently to start backing out, they had found this steam roller stuck in the entrance like a cork in a bottle.

Three o'clock it was before they found the steam roller attendant. Three thirty before he had raised a sufficient head of steam to shift the incubus. Cold dawn before the weary procession, after a further diversionary jaunt round the back streets of Llangrwl, finally set off down the Dinas Road, longing and yearning for bed.

And then, what a sight met their eyes! In front of them the road was a vast wool rug of agitated sheep. And, in front of the sheep, the gently swaying rumps of the most gigantic herd of cattle ever seen this side of Texas; making, apparently, its leisurely way to Dinas. Not for nothing was Llangrwl's ancient motto, *Thorough in All Things* . . .

A pony trap came spanking down Dinas High Street. As he passed, the driver looked with surprise and interest at Morgan's Garage. Then he reined in. "Oh, there is sad," cried Griffiths Mortimer, for he it was. "For Sale, see. And BANKRUPT STOCK MUST BE CLEARED. Whatever can have happened?"

"Wasn't for want of trying," Trevor Davies said generously. "Used to organise rallies, he did. Tried hard to popularise the motor."

"Did hear," said Evans, "that those rallies were not too successful. Rather a lot of teething troubles, apparently."

The three gentlemen shook their heads, very sorrowful.

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"Sad to see a young man deserted by his customers," said Griffiths. He brightened. "Still, 'tis an ill wind. Quite a renewed interest in the horse nowadays, I am thinking."

"A noble animal, the horse," said Trevor Davies.

"Profitable, too," said Evans.

"Yes, indeed." Griffiths Mortimer sighed. Then, with a last, pitiful glance at the empty garage, he cantered away.

Evans drank his Sleepytyme, and fell promptly into the untroubled sleep that wells from a clear conscience and the knowledge that no one for twenty miles around would embark on a motor rally if you paid them. Many weeks had now passed since that last one. Evans had not heard a car in all that time.

But what is this monstrous cacophony that shatters the midnight peace? To Evans, lifted out of sleep and flung on to a quivering shore, it sounds as though an entire motor car factory is labouring up the hill. The bed rocks. The house shakes. Suddenly the noise stops. Evans rushes to the window, and stands aghast. What looks like a whole armoured division of the British Army has come to rest under his window. A head rises from the foremost tank. "Good evening, Mr. Evans. Finding you well, I trust?"

"Why, it is Mr.—Morgan, isn't it? Whatever are you doing in that thing?"

"Joined the army when I gave up the garage. And going to occupy this area during our autumn manœuvres, we are. Nice for me, being so near home, isn't it?"

"But—" said Evans.

"Be seeing quite a lot of you, during the next fortnight," said Corporal Morgan. "Good night, Mr. Evans. Going to take up our dispositions, now. Oh, and do not be alarmed if you hear guns firing in the night. Pay for any windows broken by blast, the War Office will."

The cavalcade moved on and scattered about the little town and the hills.

Trevor Davies, hearing the indescribable din of half a dozen tanks bedding down for the night in his stackyard, seized his shotgun and prepared for action. But one glance at the monsters, and the indomitable old gentleman knew that he was outgunned. So he rang up his friend Griffiths Mortimer. "Be calling an Extraordinary Meeting again, is it, Griffiths? Another little problem on our hands, see . . ."

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SOLUTION to Who's Who puzzle on page 23: Daughter.

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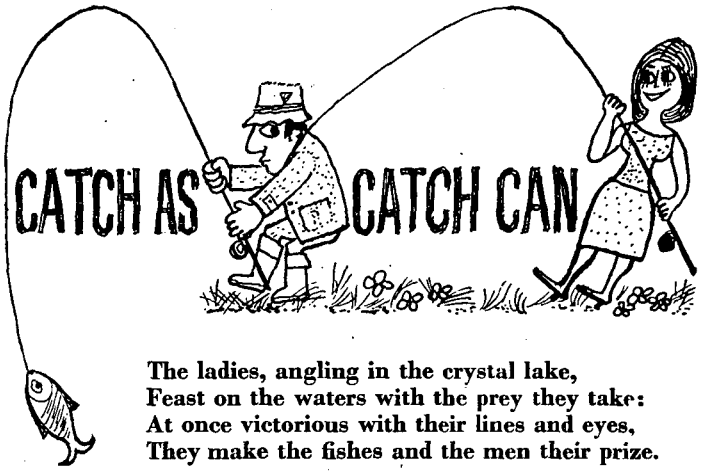

The ladies, angling in the crystal lake,
Feast on the waters with the prey they take:
At once victorious with their lines and eyes,
They make the fishes and the men their prize.

EDMUND WALLER

" Not long," said Charles. " Six weeks."
" Until you go back?"
" Yes. Can I see you every day?"
" If you want to . . ."

Idly swinging linked arms, hearing the dying grasses of the roadside click and buzz with the hasty leaps and flights of grasshoppers, heedless of cars and trucks rushing back to farms from the town, laughing and talking, they were caught in that most eager, endless pursuit of new found lovers . . . They came too soon in sight of the Anderson house.

" Let's go down to that place of yours by the creek, and see if we can see any sign of my fish," suggested Charles.

" Oh you!" scoffed Tanie, flashing mischief with her smile, " Come on then. But only to see that fish!"

JOHN IGGULDEN, *The Storms of Summer*

Angle on Anthony

Give me mine angle, — we'll to the river: there,
My music playing far off, I will betray
Tawny-finn'd fishes; my bended hook shall pierce
Their slimy jaws; and as I draw them up
I'll think them every one an Anthony,
And say, Ah ha! you're caught.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE, *Anthony and Cleopatra*

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Carpe Diem

He (Albert) was suddenly filled with the desire to propose . . . Feverishly clutching Elizabeth, he began to get his words out. His action seemed to be having a strong but very odd effect upon her. She struggled furiously with him and cried out loudly. Dumbfounded he let her go and she ran down to the bank. Only then did he realise that the alarm was ringing. Dazed and hurt he joined Elizabeth at the water's edge . . . They gazed down at the fish, Elizabeth panting after the long fight. Should he play the hypocrite and bite off her head because of the fearful wound she had dealt his masculine vanity? Should he renounce her on the grounds that love and fishing are incompatible? Or what? He looked first at Elizabeth's shining eyes, and then down at the eye and scales of the gigantic mirror carp, also shining, and knew the answer.

WILLIAM NATHAN, *Gone Fishing*

When thou wilt swimme in that live bath,
Each fish, which every channell hath,
Will amorously to thee swimme,
Gladder to catch thee, than thou him . . .
Let curious traitors, sleavesilk flies
Bewitch poore fishes wandring eyes.
For thee, thou needst no such deceit,
For thou thy selfe art thine owne bait;
That fish, that is not catch'd thereby,
Alas, is wiser farre than I.
JOHN DONNE, *The Baite*

Landing the catch

All across the fish-deck men were waiting to catch Sally Grainger as she landed on deck. Fraser grinned to himself . . . Sally Grainger landed amidst a virtual forest of muscular arms. To make everything perfect a creamer, the first of several, washed in over the starboard rail.

The girl came up the ladder like a drenched rat. Her hair was in her eyes and she appeared to be on the verge of screaming. He caught her before she could say a word. They were alone in the wheelhouse and all eyes below were on the other craft. Stefan was perhaps the first to realise that there was no hand at the wheel. He looked up quickly. All he could see was the silhouette of the upper parts of two bodies and their heads, close together. Stefan beamed . . . that little fish was going to have a wonderful trip to Burra!

JAMES WOOD, *The Lisa Bastian*

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A silk nightdress, a bottle of perfume

THE PERFECT MISTRESS

BY RONALD DUNCAN

I DON'T see much of my friend, Bratton Douglas, nowadays. That's not because he now lives down in Cornwall or that his cottage outside Mebagissey is too remote or uncomfortable. It is simply because Bratton is far too wrapped up in his companion there to notice a friend, let alone entertain a guest.

For the first ten years of their marriage, I used to see the Douglases frequently. Jane's little dinner-parties at their house in Chester Street were never dull, indeed the atmosphere at table was often electric. Jane was a jealous woman; but her spite was spasmodic. Sometimes I used to feel that I had arrived to interrupt a terrible row yet would leave that same evening sensing my departure had held up an amorous orgy.

The Douglases were never dull at any rate. But whereas most men are vain enough to pretend that their marriage is a background, Bratton admitted that he'd become merely a background to his marriage. I suspected that his private life must have been satisfactory enough or he wouldn't have been able to laugh at marriage in public. Those of us who suffer from it do so in silence; not the silence of discretion, but the discretion of sheer exhaustion. Something must have given Bratton his exuberance.

"Marriage," he used to declare, "is a mistake made by four people; there is the woman you know and the woman you'll never know; there is the man you think you are and the man you really are. It is a mistake made by four people." But in those days when he shook his shackles, he also wore them proudly as a rosary.

That was before Jane's jealousy wore him down. He came to resent it bitterly, not because there was no justification for it, but because there was. In the end, nothing makes a man hate a woman more than being forgiven by her repeatedly.

"The power to forgive should be an equal right, like ability

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to vote," Bratton complained, " but what chance have I ever to be in a position to forgive her when she's too mean to present me with even a misdemeanour, let alone a genuine failing for me to be generous about? "

He came to resent Jane's virtue and faithfulness and saw that it was not that she was being faithful to him but only to her own good opinion of herself. This was unkind of her: it is the duty of wives not merely to emulate their husbands' virtues, but their vices too. This is no theory—I once knew an Indian girl who was married to a drunkard who was a curry chef in a well-known London hotel. This girl was in fact a teetotaller, but she used to reel to bed every night feigning "drunkardness" rather than give

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her husband a bad conscience the next morning. This generous girl knew that when we give a good example to those we love we punish them more than they deserve . . .

I mustn't give the impression that Bratton was anything of a lady-killer or a professional philanderer. Far from it. He was not particularly handsome—dark, prematurely grey—whatever he wore, he achieved a shabby appearance. I suppose the quality that women found irresistible in him was that he at first gave them the impression that he did not need them; then, at the last, the belief that he needed no other. He never offered a woman anything but his need.

He was certainly not a womaniser; his work at the Bar absorbed him, though he got the dullest of briefs. It was not his fault that, though he did not seek temptation, it ran after him. And Jane was not blameless in this respect; like many very attractive women, she began by hurling her girlfriends at her husband to indicate her own confidence in herself. His first adultery occurred that way.

Jane had had a friend at school called Sara, whom she had not seen for some years because Sara lived in Barbados. When Sara came back to England to take up a job in the Civil Service, Jane suggested that she should live with her and Bratton until she found a flat of her own. The arrangement worked only too well. When Sara arrived, Jane was slightly dismayed to see how pretty her gangly schoolfriend had become. She observed that Bratton found her attractive but was sufficiently inexperienced to believe that loyalty was an attribute of her sex.

Sara stayed in Chester Street for a whole cold winter. Apparently Bratton made love to her when Jane was away for the day with her invalid father in Wiltshire. The opportunities were frequent; they were seldom taken—no doubt Bratton should have resisted the temptation entirely. But in his thirties he was an impeccable host.

Although this situation was platitudinous, there was nothing trite or superficial in either Bratton's or Sara's emotions. Neither was capable of that vulgarity known as a casual affair. Bratton was too serious, Sara too responsive. As soon as she realised that she was in love with him, she promptly moved out of his house to a hotel. It was this precipitate and inexplicable exit which made Jane seek an explanation. But Bratton's depression after Sara's departure was so apparent she did not need to wait for one.

Her first reaction was as justifiable as it was conventional: she railed at her husband, cried with self-pity, and called her

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friend a whore. Bratton weathered her anger and felt something akin to remorse, or at least he was saddened at having been caught out. But after a week or two, Jane changed her tactics, she decided that she could punish Bratton more by being magnanimous. She not only forgave him, she announced to the world that she had forgiven Sara too. She went so far as to insist that Sara should return to her room in Chester Street. This was cruel of her. Whereas Bratton had felt guilty enough before one woman, he now felt guilty towards two.

After a few months of enduring this torturé, Sara returned to the West Indies.

The status quo having been re-established, the Douglases settled down to that intimate enmity which has the blessings of convention. Indeed the postman, who got no nearer than their front door, might have described them as a happily married couple. But we who got as far as the dining-room saw Jane's gaiety was false, and Bratton's laugh was ominously loud. In time these tensions lessened; the Douglases were dependent on one another. Their friends, bored with their marital troubles, said spitefully that each deserved no better than the other.

Three or four years passed before Bratton committed adultery again. In doing this he was being faithful to himself rather than unfaithful to Jane. Of course, she did not see it that way. Whatever his emotional or spiritual needs were she condemned them if they were not centred on her.

For the most part women are incapable of any love except that of being loved. They are mirrors but a mirror is not a source of light. Men are no better, or worse; what we are is what we are. And we are as shallow as the silver behind that mirror.

Between these two adulteries, Jane furnished their lives with solid and sustained suspicion. If he was silent, Jane accused him of thinking of Sara. If he wrote a letter, she assumed it was to the West Indies.

I suppose it was these unjustifiable suspicions that eventually made Bratton realise that he might as well do something to merit them. Of course, when Jane did find out about Maria she gave full vent to her jealousy again, believing that its intensity was proof of her love. Whereas jealousy is not a proof of love, but lack of love. That point hasn't been argued very much and certainly Bratton didn't know the arguments. Again faced with Jane's anger he was divided; he abandoned that part of himself which Maria had satisfied.

This time the consequences were more serious for Bratton than they were for his mistress. Only Jane survived unscathed—appearances are never deceptive.

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I don't think I ever heard how Bratton met Maria. It doesn't matter; all meetings are accidents. For all I know, he picked her up in a bus queue. Nor do I recall what she did for a living; that's also irrelevant. The important thing was Maria gave Bratton something no other woman had ever yielded. He told me it was nothing to do with sex and I believed him. What she gave him was himself.

She was twenty-two; he, nearly twice her age. But when together she was, of course, the elder. Women always are. Maria's gift to Bratton was to give him back the gentleness and the innocence of his own childhood. That is not to say they didn't make love. Indeed there can be no innocence if there is not love; they are synonymous. But that is another matter. The point is it was not sex that sent Bratton out to Maria's little flat in Mitcham every moment he could snatch between appointments or on free evenings from Jane's social round: it was carpentry. Apparently, Maria happened to remark to Bratton soon after they'd met that she was on her way to look for a new kitchen cupboard. He went with her to the shop: the cupboard they were shown looked shoddy, the price appalled him.

On an impulse, he offered to make a cupboard for her himself. As a boy he'd been an enthusiastic carpenter though he had not touched it since. But whereas Jane would have laughed at his offer, Maria took him seriously. She immediately led him to another department in the store and helped him choose the timber, getting as lyrical over the grain of the wood as Bratton was himself. He bought himself a set of tools costing more than the cupboard they'd rejected.

They took the timber back to her flat. Bratton worked happily until three in the morning. That weekend the cupboard was finished. Bratton was thrilled with it. Nothing, passing his finals, winning his first brief, had given him so much satisfaction.

Maria's way of thanking him was to ask him if he'd make her some bookcases. A writing-desk followed. Some weekends they could be seen walking down the Portobello Road market looking for old oak planks or attachments to the electric drill she'd given him. A year passed. They were often separated but never parted.

Jane's ever-ready suspicion was alerted when she found something in a pocket of one of Bratton's old suits. It wasn't a contraceptive but a packet of wall-plugs. She'd never seen him drive even a nail in. That evening she began asking questions. Bratton parried them unconvincingly.

Jane employed a private detective. A week later, just as

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Bratton was finishing a set of small occasional tables, Jane presented herself at the door. Her first act was to smash the tables; her second was to offer to divorce Bratton, and her third move was to burst into tears. It was this gesture of defeat which of course gave her the victory. And the petulant complaint she made through her sobs that Bratton had never made her anything —routed Maria completely. To give Jane her due her complaint was genuine. Of course, Bratton could have pointed out that, since she'd furnished her house, he'd never been encouraged to make her anything but an apology. But he didn't say anything; always vulnerable to the pathetic, he was moved by Jane's child-like petulance; appearances are never deceptive, and seldom consistent.

Bratton took Jane home. He tried to comfort her. When she finally threatened to leave him, he promised not to see Maria again. As he discovered in the months which followed, in doing that he left himself. His tools were not the only thing he'd left at Mitcham.

Unable to bear not seeing Maria, he eventually called at her flat. Another tenant opened the door. Bratton tried but failed to trace her.

Typically Jane—when she'd asked him some time later if he'd seen the girl again and he'd told her of her disappearance—suggested that he employ the same detective she herself had used a month before. Jane was always of a forgiving nature.

Once again the Douglases tried to settle down. Superficially they seemed content enough. But beneath the interdependence which kept them together they resented one another: Jane because Bratton had deceived her, but not successfully enough; while his resentment was because of her continued suspicions which had been justified in the past. But they tried; they bought an old cottage in Essex and did it up together. Jane became an enthusiastic gardener. Both were then on the verge of forty. It looked as if they were going to make it.

But one day Bratton told me he was not happy. He spoke unkindly about Jane and I could see that this was partially because he was still so dependent on her. The reason he gave was that she was too possessive. He blamed her for breaking up his precious relationship with Maria. He did not realise that his misery was not due to Jane but because he himself had betrayed whatever it was the girl represented to him. He was never a particularly conscious person. But he was aware that his affection for Jane was such that if he had left her and gone with Maria, he'd have felt guilty on her account. Love is always a tyranny; it is only when we realise it is that it turns to hate . . .

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After a couple of years Bratton suffered a nervous breakdown. When he'd recovered, Jane and his friends persuaded him to take a holiday alone in Italy. He went to Florence . . .

" I was sitting alone at a café just by the statue of Perseus on the piazza beyond the Uffizi Gallery," he told me. " I happened to look up and saw a girl aged about nineteen with an older woman companion at a table near me. She was the most beautiful creature I ever saw: but I cannot describe her features. I was only aware of her eyes. It was not that I stared, but that our eyes were held, it was a moment of mysterious recognition.

" The girl's companion, no doubt her mother or perhaps her governess, called for their bill. They left the café. I was grateful they'd gone. I had never been so attracted in my life. I was frightened of that attraction; I was grateful that she had gone—at the same time I held on to the table to prevent myself running across the piazza after her.

" I thought she had crossed to a carpark and driven off. A limousine passed, I thought it carried her: I did not look up. I had another cognac to steady myself then sauntered back into the Gallery. Contemplating Donatello gave me back my peace of mind.

" Later I went into the room which contains the Tintorettos. I was standing before one when suddenly I felt compelled to turn round. Of course it was she, and her companion was by her side. She was looking at the picture and certainly did not know I was there. Then she, in her turn, was forced to look away from the picture. Again our eyes were held; again her companion touched her elbow; they moved off down the gallery towards another room. Have you ever seen the wind walk through a field of ripe barley? That's how she walked . . .

" When I was a boy, I had a pet jackdaw; her hair had the same sheen that the bird had underneath its wing. She wore a white tailored shirt with emerald cuff-links and a green suède suit. She was expensively but carelessly groomed. I was certain from her complexion that she was Italian, probably the daughter of some noble house, doing the Uffizi with her mother or paid companion.

" As she reached the door, I wondered if she would look back over her shoulder. But she was firmly marched out of the room. I realised that I might never see her again unless I followed her. I hesitated to do this, I did not want to annoy her.

" By the time my feelings had overcome my manners, it was too late.

" As you know the Uffizi is large and generally crowded. When I realised that I might never see her again, it was like grief;

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we had not spoken, eyes are more articulate than language. I felt like the Flying Dutchman— I sensed I had come home. An angry sadness came over me as I walked down the stairs towards the main door. At the bottom of the staircase there is a coffee room and a place where they sell reproductions of the old masters, and the usual postcards. Passing this it suddenly occurred to me that if the girl wanted to see me again and to escape from her chaperone, perhaps she might find an excuse to come to the coffee room. The thought held my feet. I could not leave while there was this one possibility.

" As I stood by the espresso coffee machine, I was not unaware how remote that possibility was. But I willed her to come and because my thought was not unlike a prayer, I was superstitious enough to believe that she might respond to it.

" I waited half an hour and was just about to go when I saw her hurrying down the staircase, her companion about twenty yards behind. I did not move: her eyes ran to me. We had fifteen seconds before the dragon caught up with her.

" ' Where? ' I said, knowing she knew what I meant.

" ' The café,' she whispered. For us there was only one café.

" ' When? '

" ' Tomorrow at six.'

" I moved off pretending to look for a postcard.

" ' I just had to have a glass of water,' I heard her tell her companion as she caught up with her.

" The next day I was as excited as a schoolboy—that's a cliché but it is an exact analogy—a schoolboy, on his way home. The day dragged. I went out to Fiesole, tramped the country, lunched at the Pontasieve, then wandered about too distracted to have any destination. And all that day it never occurred to me that I still didn't know her name. I knew her eyes. She completed me—that too is a platitude, but it is precisely what I felt—whole, for the first time.

" I suppose I must have walked back to Florence. I went straight to my hotel room and packed, took my case downstairs and paid my bill. I had made my mind up; I would elope with her that evening. I knew she would come. There was no question to that. It was not possible that we could be parted. You may think I was stupid to feel so certain of her, but you wouldn't if you had ever experienced the recognition I felt when first I saw her. She was not a stranger: I did not doubt she would come.

" I gave my suitcase to the porter and told him I would call back for it. He handed me a letter. I saw it was from Jane. I shoved it unopened into my pocket and strode out of the hotel.

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In five minutes, we'd be together again: together for ever. We would travel, then I would take her to England. We would live in the country. We would never go to London, or waste our own company by sharing it with friends. We would *be*.

"Then as I walked up the Calle di Dante Alighieri I stopped as my hand involuntarily drew Jane's letter from my pocket. I opened and read it. That was a mistake. Unfortunately, it was a very affectionate letter. As I read her endearments, I almost cursed her for her affection, for it had once again reached out, deprived me, and punished me with guilt.

"I stood there in the narrow street and suddenly felt the burden of her love and the tyranny of the jealousy and suspicion that went with it. Was I to go through all that again? To give her the chance of destroying this girl who now waited for me, as she had destroyed Maria and Sara too? Or could I now get myself to leave Jane for ever, abandon my profession and settle with the girl in Italy or somewhere?

"As I posed that question to myself, I already experienced the guilt I would feel towards Jane. People talk of making clean breaks; it's my experience they are never clean. I realised I could never leave Jane: I knew I could not live without the girl I was now walking to meet. A boy had entered the street, an old man was coming to the end of it.

"As I turned the corner and walked towards the piazza, I asked myself how I could possibly put an end to Jane's suspicions and jealousy. To be faithful was no answer. I realised that I wanted to punish her and humiliate her in the same way as she had punished and humiliated me. And such vindictive feelings were not inconsistent with the hand in my pocket which still unconsciously clutched her letter.

"I glanced at the clock. I was ten minutes late. I ran down one side of the square, then stopped dead and looked across at the tables outside the café.

"She was there, sitting with a drink before her, smoking a cigarette."

About a couple of months after Bratton returned from Florence, Jane asked if she could meet me for lunch.

"It's important," she said on the phone. "I must talk to someone about Bratton, and you're his best friend."

We met at Sheekey's and when she'd finished her turbot—worry only increases some women's appetites—she asked me abruptly if I knew the girl Bratton was carrying on with.

"No," I said truthfully.

"But you do know he's got somebody?"

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"I didn't say that," I lied, for he had told me only a week or so before about this girl he'd met in Florence.

"You needn't bother to cover up for him," she said. "I know something's going on. I don't have to be suspicious any more. He's so careless, it's as if he wanted to rub my nose in his damned affair."

"How?"

"Well, to begin with: when he came back from Florence he brought me a very expensive present. Bratton's not mean but, as you can see, this bracelet could only mean a guilty conscience. For the next few days he was most unnaturally polite and considerate—passing me cigarettes, holding the door for me, all those things men do for mistresses but never for wives, unless they've just been unfaithful to them."

I smiled at her shrewdness and made a few mental notes for my own behaviour.

"Any other clues?" I asked. "It could be he's just being grateful for the way you've stuck to him."

She snorted and continued, "When the post comes, he runs for it. If the phone rings, he grabs it. And when I do manage to answer my extension, it clicks off as soon as I've said, 'Hullo.'"

"Maybe it's a cat burglar, after that bracelet," I said, "ringing up to see if anybody's in."

"Yes, maybe," she said shortly, "and that thief is called La Contessa Andriana di Cortina."

I looked surprised.

"You needn't pretend you didn't know her name," she snapped. "Bratton's no longer secretive, he's become so indiscreet he just leaves things about . . . yesterday, a florist's bill on his dressing-table showing that he'd sent her three dozen roses."

"That's bad," I said thinking of Bratton's carelessness, rather than his extravagance.

"And what's more," she went on, "I know he's in love with this girl, whoever she is, because he seems so revoltingly happy now, he hums to himself; and, unlike him, he doesn't mind a hoot any more if I leave him alone in the house. I could go away for a month and he wouldn't notice."

"Aren't you letting your suspicions run away with you?"

"All I want you to tell me," Jane snapped, "is where she lives."

"Surely there was an address where the flowers were sent?"

"A hotel. He's moved her from there. Too expensive, and too respectable," she added cattily. "I want to know where she is now."

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"Surely that sort of thing has defeated you before," I said disapprovingly, and paid the bill.

My interview with Jane aroused my curiosity and, of course, I felt it my duty to alert my friend. That evening I asked him round to my flat for a drink.

He breezed in saying he couldn't stop as he was on his way to the Apollo.

"But Jane's seen the play there. I took her myself to it when you were in Florence. It's not worth seeing twice."

"I'm not taking Jane," he admitted. "She's playing bridge."

"Shouldn't you think of breaking with this Italian girl?" I said. "I can tell you Jane's already very suspicious."

"Is she?" he said with something that looked like smugness, if not satisfaction. "Anyhow, I'm not giving this girl up, however suspicious or jealous Jane becomes. This girl . . ."

"You mean Andriana?"

He smiled.

"Well, I can tell you, I'm not giving Andriana up. She's the perfect mistress."

"Really?" I yawned. "Do tell me about her."

"To begin with: she loves me, not just the idea of marrying me; she's always there when I want her; she has no other friends, no career to cuckold me with; and what's more, she likes what I like—even the play at the Apollo. She's not bitchy about my wife or jealous of my work or my friends. And she completes me: with Andriana, I can experience solitude without loneliness . . ."

He was getting too lyrical.

"Don't forget your appointment," I said.

Not surprisingly the crisis occurred within a few weeks. Jane had tracked Bratton down to a cottage outside Mevagissey which he rented. She motored there and, I gather, arrived about midnight.

Bratton was in bed. He went and opened the door, she marched in past him to the bedroom.

"Well," she cried, picking up a silk nightdress from the end of the double bed, "where's your girlfriend?"

"Who?" asked Bratton innocently.

"This Contessa Andriana," she spat, "or are you going to pretend you've never heard of her?"

"Never," he said smilingly. "You're letting your suspicions run away with you again."

"Am I?" she cried, flinging the nightdress across the room and sweeping a bottle of perfume from the dressing-table on to the floor.

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" As I say, you're letting your suspicions run away with you," he repeated quietly.

" And what about those flowers sent to her at her hotel? Deny that. Now, tell me you've never heard of her."

" I sent the flowers," he admitted, " to a person who doesn't exist. And I left the bill in my dressing-room to teach you a lesson. I've suffered enough from your suspicion. Even if a woman had existed to whom I'd sent some flowers, you've no right to assume she's my mistress, or come charging down here. And now you have, and found your bloody suspicions are unfounded, perhaps you'll apologise? "

Jane didn't answer. She stalked out of the bedroom and went into every room of the cottage. Finding nobody, she went into the kitchen. A tray on the kitchen table with a single dirty plate on it showed that Bratton had dined alone. The pile of unwashed crockery in the sink seemed to indicate that, at least, he'd been alone for some days.

Jane went back to the bedroom. She sat on the edge of the bed and, for once, was silent. Bratton stood beside her for a moment, and then put his arm round her gently as though consoling her for the humiliation she'd brought upon herself, with some assistance from him. His gesture was premature.

" Do you mean to say," she asked incredulously, " that you sent those roses to a person who didn't exist merely to try to trap me? "

" I wanted to teach you a lesson."

" How you must hate me," she said. " I didn't think you could be so cruel. And are you telling me that you didn't meet some girl in Italy or bring her to London? "

" I did see somebody in Florence, in the Uffizi Gallery. I asked her to meet me the next day at a café. She kept the appointment. I didn't. I saw her across the square sitting at the table, waiting; but I couldn't do to her what I had done to Sara and Maria. So, I walked away. I caught the next plane to London. That's all there is to it."

" That's all there is to it," Jane mimicked bitterly. " Then who have you been running about with this last month, dining with, going to the theatre with, and singing in your bath about? "

" Nobody, darling. I've just been about by myself."

" All to teach me a lesson? "

" Yes," he said fondly, " so that you would drop your suspicions and jealousy and we could begin again."

He put his arm round her, this time more confidently. Jane removed his arm then stood up before him.

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"Bratton," she said quietly, "I forgave you for your affair with Sara, and with Maria too. But this is something I can't forgive. I shall divorce you and cite your Italian mistress."

"You can't do that," he said, "she doesn't exist."

"No?" she queried, looking down at the broken bottle of perfume and picking up the nightdress again. "I know when I'm beaten. I could compete with and defeat your real mistresses, a Maria or a Sara, because I know that in time any mistress will reveal the same failings that are found in a wife. But this time I know I've no chance. Whoever this girl in Florence was you've fallen in love with, I can't compete with somebody in your imagination; she's too close to you. Clearly, you don't need me any more."

Jane picked up her handbag and went towards the door.

"You can't leave me alone," Bratton cried.

"I'm not leaving you alone," she said. "That's just the point."

Bratton didn't say any more.

The divorce was uncontested. About a year later, I happened to be in Cornwall and called unannounced at Bratton's cottage. He looked well and happy.

When I arrived he was painting the front door.

"I thought it should be black," he said, "but Andriana insisted on blue."

During lunch, he addressed most of his remarks to her. And after the meal he announced he was going for a walk with her. I never saw a man so content or whole.

The solitary figure did not even wave when I drove past him on the road.

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RONALD DUNCAN, poet and playwright, has spent his life withstanding the pull of groups. He prefers to remain an individual. He has travelled in Africa and India (where he lived for a while with Gandhi) and been engaged at different times in coalmining, farming, and the City.

He never wanted to be a writer but finally capitulated to a bullying destiny. He counts T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, and Benjamin Britten among his close friends—wrote the libretto of The Rape of Lucretia for the latter.

His autobiography, All Men Are Islands, has just been published by Rupert Hart-Davis.

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Somehow he had badly underestimated her

UP ROSE EMILY

BY WALLACE CRAWFORD

DAMMIT, she must be dead," bellowed my Uncle Rodney, striding about the kitchen and jabbing the carving knife into the white, scrubbed table each time he passed it.

" Don't do that, Rodney," expostulated my Aunt Charlotte. " I'm tired of filling holes in that table. It's a nuisance."

My uncle put down the carving knife.

" I tell you she must be dead," he reiterated. " Didn't the doctor certify her dead yesterday? "

Clementina, the au pair girl, standing by the gas stove, watched him with wide, shining eyes as he pounded up and down the kitchen. It was easy to see she doted on him.

He continued to pound around the table, his boots thumping the floor, in an ever-increasing crescendo of speed. He was working himself into a real frenzy.

" Stop it," said my aunt sharply, raising her hands from the melon she was cutting. " You'll make holes in the floor next."

For a special reason, my Uncle Rodney wore very heavy boots. He ceased to peregrinate. He stared down at his boots, as if my aunt's reproof had brought them painfully to mind. His not inconsiderable moustache worked visibly and, finding himself immediately behind Clementina, he pinched her backside. She uttered an ecstatic squawk of appreciation, which was largely obscured by the sizzling of the pork chops she was cooking. My uncle, however, now appeared to be more composed.

" She was quite dead last night," he muttered.

" True, dear," agreed Aunt Charlotte complacently. " Georgie," she continued, addressing me, " how would you like a piece of apple pie? "

But recently arrived at my uncle's house, I had anticipated this question for it was one with which she had habitually greeted me since my fifth birthday. For her, the troubles of all small boys could be rectified instantly by the presentation of a large piece of apple pie. The fact that I was now thirty-two, and

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married to her daughter Shirley, now aged twenty-seven, made no difference at all. For Aunt Charlotte, I was still a small boy who needed apple pie. In a sense she was right.

"Aunt Lottie—" I replied, as Clementina leaned over the stove in order to extract the apple pie, an opportunity which my uncle could not miss—"Aunt Lottie, isn't the apple pie for lunch?"

"Yes, dear boy."

"Then perhaps I'd better wait. It might spoil my appetite, don't you think?"

"Perhaps you're right," she conceded, anxiously looking me over, as if she feared I should fade away before lunch. "And how is dear Shirley?"

"Very well, I believe. I haven't seen her for a week."

"Oh! Why not?"

"She's over in Paris, buying clothes. Says she can't see a thing over here."

"Silly girl!" commented my aunt cheerfully.

"I was wondering," I began, "I was wondering if Uncle Rodney could possibly lend me a hundred pounds. You see, the bank . . ."

The grimace of appeasement fell from my uncle's face. Turning rudely from Clementina's adoring smile he glared at me. "Boy, what are you saying?" he bellowed. "A hundred pounds? You may as well demand a million."

Dramatically he lowered his voice. He jabbed a finger in my chest. "I tell you this in all confidence, and please don't repeat it in the City, my boy, otherwise my credit will be ruined . . ."

He paused, possibly for the purpose of contemplating the toppling edifice of his credit, and I took the opportunity of making a mild interjection.

"But I never go near the City, Uncle," I said.

To the best of my knowledge and belief, he had not been near it himself for the last ten years.

"Never mind that, boy. The point is, I haven't got a hundred pounds. I haven't got twenty pounds. In a week's time, unless I find the Will, your poor Aunt Lottie—" Here he cast upon her a glance of acute commiseration—"and I will be destitute."

"Terrible!" remarked Aunt Lottie. "Not enough melon to go round. I shall have to open a tin of grapefruit."

"The house will be sold over our heads," continued my uncle, his fingers stroking feverishly at one wing of the moustache, "and we shall be cast into the street. No, into the workhouse," he corrected himself.

"No workhouse these days," I observed.

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"Then some of these petty local bureaucrats can build one for us," he replied pettishly.

He sat on the table and swung his legs to and fro. One could understand Clementina falling for him. He looked extremely young, even if his moustache did droop a bit.

"But I don't quite understand," I said. "I always thought you owned at least a dozen houses along this road."

"I do. But what of it? Are you suggesting I should turn out perfectly good tenants? Heaven knows, they're hard enough to come by these days . . ."

"Certainly not," I said warmly.

"Well, then." Moodily, he thumped the leg of the table with the heel of his boot. The table, eight foot long and four foot wide, must have weighed at least five hundredweight, but it moved under the impact. My aunt, busy with the tin-opener, winced.

"It all hinges on the Will," continued her husband. "If I can find the Will, we are saved. We are all saved." He waved his arm dramatically, embracing everyone present. "All shall benefit." He furrowed his brow, thinking. "Your aunt shall go to Seville for a holiday."

"I've always wanted to go to Seville," agreed Aunt Charlotte.

"Never mind that now," said my uncle. "I shall buy for Clementina . . . six pairs of nylon stockings. Possibly silk. Possibly a dozen, if she is a good girl."

Clementina smiled lusciously and turned the pork chops over. You could see she was willing to be good in any fashion he required. He leaned precariously from the table and administered another affectionate pinch.

"There, there," he said. "Possibly," he added, "I may lend you that hundred pounds." He gave me a self-satisfied nod, as if all obligations had now been complied with.

"It's just possible," remarked Aunt Lottie, "that dear Georgie is mentioned in the Will, anyway."

My uncle gave his moustache a thorough twirl. "What? Oh, yes. Now I think of it, he is. Fifty pounds, I think."

"So you know what's in the Will," I said.

"Of course. I dictated it to her years ago. But the trouble is, your Great-Aunt Emily has a mania for hiding things. Last summer I discovered she'd hidden it in the fifth volume of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*, so I thought, that's all right, I know where it is, and I left it there. But yesterday, when I went to the bookcase, it wasn't there. I can't find it. Unless we can find it, it may be awkward. She's got some feckless nephew in the Crown Colonies . . ."

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"That would be Caroline's boy," interjected my aunt. "Died in 1897 of an apoplexy. When you were a little boy. Remember?" She nodded at my uncle.

"I was never a little boy. As I was saying," he continued, obstinately, "the whole situation hinges on the Will. Either . . ."

"But does it hinge on the Will?" questioned my aunt in very reasonable tones. Then she became more agitated. "Good heavens, I've forgotten the vegetables."

She patted the lace on her collar and trotted to the sink, where she began to peel potatoes. "Keep those chops hot, Tina," she said, "and don't fry them to a frazzle."

"Just what do you mean, Lottie?" demanded Uncle Rodney.

"Do stop playing with your moustache, Rodney. You'll get your fingers greasy before lunch."

Expertly, probably painlessly, she hooked out a couple of eyes. One received the impression that had they been human she would have done it with an equal competence.

"What I mean," she went on with careful emphasis, "is that there is no point in worrying about the Will if Emily is not dead."

"But this is ludicrous," exploded my uncle. "She was dead yesterday."

"All I know is—I wonder if that will be enough potatoes? I'd better do some more—all I know is, that when I went into her room ten minutes before Georgie arrived—dear boy—I'm certain she was still breathing."

"She can't be. Didn't the quack pronounce her dead?"

"Doctors can be wrong," demurred Aunt Charlotte mildly.

"It's nonsense! It's utterly revolting!" My uncle raised a forefinger and wagged it furiously at each one of us, but mostly at my aunt, who continued to hook eyes from potatoes. "At ninety-five, she should be dead. At ninety-five, everyone should be dead."

"Shush!" commanded my aunt. "She might hear you."

"Dammit!" said my uncle, "she's been stone deaf these thirty years."

"Ah, yes, but you don't know what happens when they die," responded his wife, a trifle illogically.

He gave her a glare and then, reluctantly, nodded assent. "That's true, we don't know." He had always been a very religious man.

"All the same," he continued, moodily hacking at the table, "she's pulled this trick before, you know. Last summer—August Bank Holiday—she was dead for six hours; then, just as I'd decided to go out for a run in the Bentley, she sat up and

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demanded a cup of coffee. With rum in it!" He said this as if the purchase of rum was not within his means.

"Ah, and whose fault was that?" queried my aunt mysteriously, as she tipped naked gleaming potatoes into a pan. "Put those on the stove, Clementina. I wonder if I've done enough? There's Alys coming, and she eats like a horse. And Edward and Mabel, and they were born hungry. I should know."

"What do you mean, Lottie?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean, Rodney," she replied severely. "Put those on the stove, Clementina. And don't forget to put bread on the table."

"I don't understand you at all," said my uncle uneasily.

"Oh, yes, you do. Who was up in her room when she sat up and demanded coffee with rum in it?"

"Well, it so happened, I was."

"Exactly," said my aunt. "And who went up to her room first thing this morning?"

"Well, I did. I was looking for the Will."

"There you are, then!" said Aunt Lottie. "I wonder if we ought to fry these potatoes?"

At this stage I should explain that my Uncle Rodney possessed involuntary, although quite distinct, necromantic powers. These were so pronounced that if he walked over the grass of the churchyard the most horrible rumblings and grumblings and heavings could be heard; and a large crack in the family vault testified to his presence some years ago on the occasion of an important interment. The garden of his house, incidentally, was in summer a veritable tropical abundance, since nothing ever really died; not even the half-hardy annuals, which in my garden I can't get to grow at all.

"Well, look, Charlotte," he said now. "Whether she's dead or not, the Will's got to be found. I've combed the rest of the house. I suggest you and Georgie go up to her room and give it a thorough search. I'll direct operations."

"Do you think that's wise?" murmured Aunt Lottie.

"If I stand outside on the landing, it should be safe."

"Come along then," she said, with decision.

We trooped upstairs.

"Where shall we start?" said my aunt.

"Try that tallboy," said my uncle, standing well back from the threshold.

Great-Aunt Emily's cheeks were very rosy. She did not look at all dead to me. Draped hugely over the foot of the bed was a vast black cat.

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"Isn't that Old Tom?" I queried incredulously.

"Of course it's Old Tom," shouted my uncle, from the landing. His voice was testy. "Get on with it. Is there anything in that tallboy, Lottie?"

"I'm looking, dear."

Old Tom! I could remember him yowling at nights when I was a lad of fourteen.

"But I thought he was knocked down and killed years ago," I protested.

"He was," replied my aunt, placidly contemplating a bundle of letters tied with pink ribbon. "I wonder who wrote these?"

Uncle Rodney poked his nose over the threshold. "That would be Eustace," he growled.

"Of course. Dear Eustace."

"No good, that man. Only after her money."

"She was very fond of him," said Aunt Lottie. She sighed with the deepest sentiment.

My uncle's nose made a further extension into the room. "Put all that junk away, Lottie. Try her clothes. I'm sure she's hidden it in her clothes. Just the sort of thing she would do. Trying to fox me."

It seemed to me, at that moment, that Great-Aunt Emily stirred perceptibly. At all events, Old Tom arose and gave her an indignant glance. Then he turned around a couple of times, dug his paws into the counterpane, and settled down again.

Aunt Charlotte had perceived this pantomime. "Keep outside, Rodney," she warned.

"If Old Tom died years ago," I inquired, when we had all stopped holding our breath, "what's he doing here now?"

"Well, you know," replied my aunt apologetically, "your uncle was just burying him, when . . . he got up . . . and . . ."

Her fingers, burrowing into the second drawer of the massive chest, produced a fearsome-looking garment.

"Corsets!" crowed my uncle, in the same tone one might employ for "Eureka!" "Of course. Unroll them, Lottie. Unroll them at once. That's the very place."

"Very well, Rodney. But you must turn your face away."

He compromised by putting his hand to his face, although I suspect he was looking through his fingers.

"He must be at least nineteen, that cat," I remarked.

"He is nineteen," said my aunt. She rolled up the corsets. "Not here, Rodney," she announced.

"Right!" My uncle assumed an extremely keen expression. "Try those elastic-sided boots," he said. "On the floor, there!" He pointed.

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Aunt Charlotte hesitated. "Much more likely in the long ones, with the buttons," she observed. She picked one up, and her hand delved. She produced a long sealed envelope. "Here it is, I expect."

"Give it me," bawled my uncle, stamping with excitement. Both wings of his moustache shot over the threshold.

Up rose Emily. Her body, creaking at the middle, assumed an angle of forty-five degrees, and she sat up. One eye opened a trifle glassily. I regarded her with consternation and a nasty feeling in the tummy.

"Get outside, Rodney," commanded my aunt imperatively.

He got outside. He cowered on the landing. Old Tom, intimidated by all this disturbance, arose languidly, gave to each of us a glare of reproach, then leapt from the bed to streak between my uncle's legs and down the staircase. He looked extremely alive. Old Tom, I mean, not my uncle. *He* looked half dead with chagrin.

My aunt now approached the bedstead, and rested one hand delicately on a brass knob in an attitude of the utmost repose.

"Lie down, Emily," she said gently. "Lie down, there's a good girl."

There was a great deal more in my aunt's voice than can possibly be conveyed in words. At all events, it worked. Aunt Emily discarded the angle of forty-five degrees and subsided to a more decorous horizontal. She creaked slowly backwards and at last her head came to rest again upon the pillow. Her cheeks, I thought, were not quite so rosy.

"Thank goodness for that," breathed Aunt Charlotte.

She whisked me out of the room, closing the door smartly but softly.

"Can I read it now?" asked my uncle.

"Certainly not," she snapped. "You know that would be most improper. You must wait till Croop reads it after the funeral tomorrow."

"If there is a funeral," he muttered glumly.

My uncle's house was curiously constructed. In the entrance hall there was a sort of alcove with a long coloured dormer window above it. A couple of quite steep steps led up to this alcove, and within it were placed a chair, a small table, and a bamboo work-basket. Here my Aunt Charlotte would sit; on a sunny afternoon, with a coloured aura of light about her, she would look something like a saint in a niche.

Here she would sew, or read, or just think; and it was understood that when she sat here sewing, or reading, or just thinking,

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my Uncle Rodney should not disturb her. It was an admirable arrangement. After all, a man can escape—to his club, to his pub, even to his fancy lady. But what about a respectable housewife? She can't escape. Here, in her alcove, my aunt was visible, yet apart. She had escaped. It says something for something or other about my uncle that once she was ensconced in the niche he would not even ask her to make an early cup of tea. Perhaps it was, in him, the remnants of a sense of justice.

But although he was denied, younger generations were permitted some latitude, and could at least approach her. If she didn't want to answer, she just ignored you, and you went away. But usually she answered. An hour after lunch, therefore, when my uncle was snoozing on the sofa in the study, I went to the alcove, put one foot on the lower step, rested my hands on my knee, and gave Aunt Charlotte a look.

She was sewing and, I believe, thinking, but she vouchsafed me a nod. "What is it, Georgie?"

Not knowing how to begin, I grunted.

"It is impolite to grunt," she remarked.

"It must have been . . . difficult, for you, all these years," I managed, at length.

She shot me a slightly affronted glance, but remained placid, her fingers busy at the needle.

"I don't mind. I've got used to it. It's even been useful, at times. I'm very fond of Old Tom, for instance."

I nodded.

"It's the levitation that irritates me," she continued.

"*The levitation?*"

"Yes. You knew, of course?"

"I suspected."

"Yes. His boots are weighted with lead, you know, and he carries weights in his pockets. Like we put in the curtains to keep them straight," she explained.

"Does it happen often?". I had always been consumed with curiosity about this business.

"It's dreadfully annoying at times. I mean, when he puts his carpet slippers on at night and goes floating up the staircase ahead of me, I could slap him. I don't, of course," she added hastily.

"I can understand your feelings."

"I doubt it," she said drily. Then she sighed. "Sometimes I think he can't control it at all. Some years ago, he was putting tiles on the roof, and—well, he was away for days, and I never knew where he got to. Just floated away in the air. Fortunately, none of the neighbours saw him."

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" I would really like to see him do it," I said eagerly. " Do you think he would show me? "

She shook her head. " He's shy about it. He *is* rather shy in some ways, your uncle. Although . . . not in all." She mused for some seconds, as if I were not there. " Poor Clementina's backside must be black and blue. All the same," she added brightly, " I must say I like having all those flowers in the garden for the best part of the year. And now be off with you. I've talked enough."

The following morning my uncle descended the staircase in conventional fashion and encountered his nephew in the hall.

" Have they screwed her down yet? " he demanded, not unkindly but simply as one requiring information.

" I couldn't tell you, Uncle," I replied. " I know nothing about such things."

" Then it's time you found out, my boy," he said severely. " After breakfast, you hop upstairs and look."

Together we entered the breakfast room, where Aunt Lottie, with the assistance of Clementina, was dishing up kidneys and bacon. My uncle sniffed at the bacon and pinched Clementina.

He sat down. " What I should have done," he remarked darkly, " was to have taken her for another ride in the Bentley." His face brightened. " I say, do you think Lottie, if I put the coffin in the car, now, it would . . ."

" Really, Rodney, have some respect. And eat your bacon."

" Yes, yes, I suppose you're right." He took a mouthful of kidney, his eye on Clementina's topography as she retreated to the kitchen. He chuckled, and gave his moustache a delicate twirl. " But it nearly did the trick last time, didn't it? Frightened the wits out of her."

This I could understand. My uncle's Bentley, vintage nineteen-twenty-something, was a fearsome-looking vehicle with an incredible turn of speed. He was a very fast driver. Happily it needed a gallon every five miles, and the tank was often empty. If he wanted to take it out, he usually had to walk down the road to the garage to get a gallon of petrol in order to get the car down the road to the garage to fill her up. If we travelled a long way, we all sat in the front because the back was full of cans of petrol.

" I can't eat a thing," announced my aunt. " Not until afterwards," she added sombrely.

My uncle's features were serene. He munched steadily at bacon and kidneys. My own appetite was a trifle off.

" Have you eaten enough, Georgie? " inquired Aunt Charlotte tenderly; more tenderly, I thought, than the question warranted. I felt there must be more on her mind.

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"You wouldn't like a piece of apple pie to finish off with?"

"Good heavens, no, Aunt Lottie."

"Oh, well! You can have some sandwiches and perhaps a piece of veal-and-ham pie later. Afterwards!"

She put her elbows on the table and clasped her fingers together. I thought her eyes looked misty. "It seems a dreadful pity she never married him," she said.

"Married who?" demanded my uncle.

"Married whom," she said.

"Don't quibble, my girl. What are you talking about?"

"Eustace, of course."

"The man was a blackguard. A fortune hunter." My uncle began searching in his waistcoat pockets for a toothpick.

"I don't think you're right, Rodney. He was a very charming man."

"Me—not right?"

"He used to bring her his copy of *Punch* every week, anyway."

"When he had read it," countered my uncle.

"Of course," said my aunt. "Why not?"

At eleven o'clock we assembled outside the house. The hearse was waiting, the coffin was up, and five carriages attended for the transportation of a horde of relatives, many of whom I had never met before.

"Do you think Eustace is here?" I inquired of my uncle.

"Dammit, no, boy. He's in the Crown Colonies somewhere. And a good job too." He stamped his feet, and one or two paving stones heaved. "Now then, is everyone ready?" he shouted. "Can we get a move on?"

It was a beautiful morning. Sunshine gleamed on the glossy black coats of the horses, and a gentle breeze stirred the plumes which arose from their flowing manes. In black and silver the hearse filled the foreground of the picture, and a heavy perfume oozed from the flowers piled within. Yet I thought it a morning for life, rather than death, and felt sad about poor Great-Aunt Emily. Across the road a number of neighbours stood admiring the whole turnout.

My aunt's head projected from the window of the first carriage. "Do you think you should go, Rodney?" she inquired anxiously.

He backed towards the gate, clearly disappointed. "Well, perhaps not."

My aunt descended from the carriage and approached us. She waved a mauve umbrella. "You know what I mean," she said with a world of meaning.

At this moment a serious diversion arose. A large wreath, actually my uncle's, began to slide from the top of the coffin, and

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in ten seconds it became perfectly apparent that the lid was opening.

"You didn't look, did you?" growled my uncle.

"No, Uncle," I agreed miserably. I didn't add that I don't like inspecting coffins to see if they are screwed down properly.

"The poor boy's stomach was upset," observed my aunt. She tapped the ferrule of her umbrella on the pavement and watched the coffin with complacent anticipation. The lid had risen another three inches.

"Dammit, I knew this would happen," exploded my uncle. "If only I had some petrol in the Bentley, I'd fix her. Trying to cook my goose at the last minute, she is." He stamped his feet again. "My kingdom for a gallon of petrol," he muttered.

"Shall I pop down and get some?" I murmured.

"No good, boy. She'd be up the stairs and in bed and shouting for coffee and rum before you got back. No, this calls for immediate action."

He pulled his moustache fiercely, then knelt on the pavement.

"What are you doing, Rodney?" demanded my aunt. "Get up at once. All the neighbours are watching."

"Damn the neighbours," he said, and began to unlace his boots. He removed them, and stood up. Then, in a curious parody of slow motion, he appeared to dance on the pavement.

Aunt Lottie grasped my elbow. "Watch, Georgie," she murmured, in my ear. "This is what you wanted to see."

Gasping with admiration, I saw my uncle's black silk socks lose contact with terra firma as he rose into the air. I feared he was too late, for Great-Aunt Emily was now sitting bolt upright in the coffin and sunning herself in the midst of the flowers.

"Well," said my aunt, "at least she won't catch cold. She's well wrapped up."

My uncle now rose so rapidly that I thought he had lost control and would go up and up, above the hearse and above the house until he should disappear into one of the feathery wisps of cirrus which adorned, at the uppermost limits of vision, the pale blue canopy of the sky. But, gyrating giddily, since his centre of gravity now resided in the weights sewn into his pockets, he managed to grasp the polished rail on the driver's perch, and, tugging powerfully, brought his nose down to within an inch of the astonished driver's face.

"Get down, man," he shouted, and the lackey leapt for safety. My uncle, his hands gripping the rail and his feet rising in the air to an angle of sixty-five degrees, now began to revolve slowly in the fashion of a jettisoned spaceman; but finally achieved a species of equilibrium and to the accompaniment of

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many little cries of admonition from my aunt secured himself in the seat. "Pass those boots up," he commanded.

I passed them up, and he put them on again.

"Now then," he said ominously. He gave me a wink, then turned round and winked at Great-Aunt Emily, who returned his gaze unwinkingly.

"Gee-up," he shouted and, seizing the reins, brought the leather down smartly on the nearest shimmering rump. With a jolt and a bound the horses were away. Great-Aunt Emily already, I surmised, unnerved by the spectacle of levitation, now seemed to crumple and I saw her startled eyes peering over the rim of the coffin. Precipitately she subsided, presumably for ever. Meanwhile the hearse careered down the road in the fashion of a covered wagon being pursued by hordes of whooping Red Indians, and never a U.S. cavalryman in sight.

"Why didn't he just climb up?" I asked my aunt.

"His boots are too heavy, dear," she replied.

She returned to her carriage and at a slower and more seemly pace the remainder of the cortège followed the hearse. I stood watching them until they disappeared at the end of the road, and it then occurred to me that I had been left behind.

I was not alone for long, however. Entering the house a few minutes later I found my Uncle Rodney already returned, sitting on the table in the kitchen. He was pinching Clementina's person and supping cooking sherry.

"Left her at the lich-gate," he announced.

"You got back quickly," I said suspiciously.

"Mind your own business," he said. He looked very pleased with himself.

However, Great-Aunt Emily wiped the smile off his face after all. True, they screwed her down, and she was not only dead, but buried; and possibly glad to be so, at ninety-five. But somehow he had sadly underestimated her.

For when, on the following morning, Mr. Croop sat down to read the Will, his words were unexpected. My Aunt Charlotte got five hundred pounds, payable only on the death of my Uncle Rodney; Georgie—that's me—got one hundred pounds, payable forthwith; my Uncle Rodney got one and ninepence, payable only on the death of Old Tom; and the residue of the estate, amounting to fifteen thousand, four hundred and nineteen pounds, eight shillings and sixpence, went to Eustace, the gentleman who used to bring her his copy of *Punch* every week, and who wrote, from one of the Crown Colonies, all those letters tied up with pink ribbon and hidden in the tallboy.

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His eyes flashed, his white goatee jutted . . .

MAN WITH A PAST

BY T. K. BROWN III

FOR the person asleep," Professor Pickering said, "time, in a sense, stands still. When he regains consciousness, he has jumped a certain interval into the future. Indeed, there have been cases of prolonged coma lasting many years, from which the patient has awakened to an entirely alien world."

"It would appear to be somewhat more difficult to leap into the past," Professor Dickson remarked dryly.

"Yet I have done it!" Professor Pickering said, his eyes flashing through his bifocals and his white goatee jutting forward. "I have done it and have come back! To state it simply, it was a matter of detecting the principles involved and building the instrument to apply them. The recent advances in electroencephalography were an immense help; I was fortunate enough to discover that the electrical impulses of brain action could be harnessed to the practical needs of time exploration."

Dickson could not keep the note of incredulity from his voice. "You are not trying to tell me, old friend, that you have visited the past with the help of some contrivance."

By way of answer, Professor Pickering went to the bookcase and took down a volume. "I was present at Lincoln's Gettysburg address," he said with dignity. "I appear in this book of Mathew Brady's Civil War photographs." He flipped open to the page in question and pointed to a figure in the audience. "It would be hard to mistake me," he said. "Please make use of this magnifying-glass."

Professor Dickson laughed heartily. "Good lord, man, I trust you will not be so ill-advised as to offer this to anyone but a close friend as evidence of anything whatsoever. Why, everyone in this picture looks like everyone else."

Professor Pickering took from his pocket a box about the size of a matchbox (large kitchen size). "With this dial," he said, "I register the number of years I wish to regress; with this one I select the longitude and latitude of my destination. I have

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long wished to visit Elizabethan England and have already ascertained the precise location of Sir Francis Bacon's estate in Gorhambury, where he was in residence in 1622. I believe I will drop in on Sir Francis."

"No doubt he will find your speech rather bizarre," Professor Dickson said, "to say nothing of your dress."

"Yes, clothing is a problem, since I intend to visit several widely different cultures. I am wearing these slacks and this T-shirt in the hope that they will attract a minimum of attention. In any event, I am prepared to make a hasty departure from whatever times and places I visit." So saying, he made a final adjustment on his dials and pressed a button on the side of the box. Professor Dickson was dumbfounded to see his friend disappear before his eyes—at the same instant that Sir Francis Bacon, taking the air in his garden, was no less surprised to see a stranger materialise in the rosebed.

"How now, varlet?" said Sir Francis.

"I'll only trouble you for a minute," Pickering said. "Just tell me one thing. Are you the author of the plays attributed to William Shakespeare?"

"Of course not," Sir Francis said testily. "What ever gave you that crazy idea? They were all written by Eddie de Vere, 17th Earl of Oxford."

"Thank you," said the professor. "Several of my colleagues will be pained to hear it." And with that he adjusted his little box, pushed the button, and showed up on the steps of the Roman Senate on 15th March 44 B.C., just in time to witness the stabbing of Julius Caesar. It took place very much as Eddie de Vere had set it down.

Thereafter, he ricocheted around in ancient history; it is hardly necessary to detail his adventures. It was while he was watching the building of the Great Pyramid at Gizeh that he resolved to take the big plunge. *How did things begin?* The origins of man? The beginnings of life itself? He could always come back to these relatively modern times.

For his first expedition he set the machine to take him back 500,000 years, and to set him in the African Transvaal, where the most recent findings of palæoanthropology had placed the earliest traces of man's direct ancestors.

Professor Pickering pressed the button.

And that, for all practical purposes, was the end of Professor Pickering.

Did he tumble off a cliff? Fall prey to some prehistoric monster? Get his head knocked in by his xenophobic fellow

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man? No; he arrived safely and met with no physical mishap.

What he had not known, however, was that, as he moved farther and farther into the past, he was actually retracing the line of his forebears, backwards through the generations, backwards through the evolution of the race. So long as he had confined himself to historical times, his retreat down the evolutionary ladder was too slight to matter, and his personality, state of knowledge, and memory remained intact; but when he took the half-million-year leap—

Professor Pickering (emeritus now) scampered nimbly up the baobab tree, the only white-goateed australopithecine ape in all Africa with bifocals, slacks, and T-shirt—and a brain much too stupid to know what to do with that funny little box in his pocket.

T. K. Brown III 1963

STRANGER STILL . . .

"Very well, sir," said I. "Are the stairs good?"

"They're grand," said he; and then as I was going, "Keep to the wall," he added; "there's nae bannisters. But the stairs are grand under foot."

Out I went into the night. It was so dark, it seemed a body could scarce breath; but I pushed out with foot and hand, and presently struck the wall with the one, and the lowermost round of the stair with the other. The wall, by the touch, was of fine hewn stone; the steps, too, though somewhat steep and narrow, were of polished mason-work . . .

The house of Shaws stood five full storeys high, not counting lofts. Well, as I advanced, it seemed to me the stair grew airier and a thought more lightsome; and I was wondering what might be the cause of this change, when a second blink of the summer lightning came and went. If I did not cry out, it was because fear had me by the throat; and if I did not fall, it was more by Heaven's mercy than my own strength. It was not only that the flash shone in on every side through breaches in the wall, so that I seemed to be clambering aloft upon an open scaffold . . . The stair had been carried no higher: to set a stranger mounting it in darkness was to send him straight to his death.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON, *Kidnapped*

Yesterday upon the stair
I met a man who wasn't there;
He wasn't there again today—
I wish the man would go away.

ANON

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RAYMOND CHANDLER

KILLER IN THE RAIN

THE CURTAIN

THE CURTAIN, another in our series of Chandler's earliest stories, was first published in Black Mask, an American monthly. Subsequently he used part of it in the construction of his novel, The Big Sleep, a brilliant piece of work on its own, and a striking example of Raymond Chandler's power to depict a psychopathic killer-personality in a few terse phrases. Here, too, is his passionate concern for the innocent fall-guy—the poor boob who gets wiped out simply because he crossed the track of a criminal.

THE first time I ever saw Larry Batzel he was drunk outside Sardi's in a second-hand Rolls-Royce. There was a tall blonde with him who had eyes you wouldn't forget. I helped her argue him out from under the wheel so that she could drive.

The second time I saw him he didn't have any Rolls-Royce or any blonde or any job in pictures. All he had was the jitters and a suit that needed pressing. He remembered me. He was that kind of drunk.

I bought him enough drinks to do him some good and gave him half my cigarettes. I used to see him from time to time "between pictures." I got to lending him money. I don't know just why. He was a big handsome brute with eyes like a cow and something innocent and honest in them. Something I don't get much of in my business.

He never got anywhere in pictures, and after a while I didn't see him around any more.

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Illustration by Robb

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Then one day out of the clear blue I got a cheque for all he owed me and a note that he was working on the tables—gambling not dining—at the Dardanella Club, and to come out and look him up.

I didn't go to see him, but I found out somehow or other that Joe Mesarvey owned the place, and that Joe Mesarvey was married to the blonde with the eyes, the one Larry Batzel had been with in the Rolls that time. I still didn't go out there.

Then very early one morning there was a dim figure standing by my bed, between me and the windows. The blinds had been pulled down. That must have been what wakened me. The figure was large and had a gun.

I rolled over and rubbed my eyes.

"O.K.," I said sourly. "There's twelve bucks in my pants and my wristwatch cost twenty-seven fifty. You couldn't get anything on that."

The figure went over to the window and pulled a blind aside an inch and looked down at the street. When he turned again I saw that it was Larry Batzel.

His face was drawn and tired and he needed a shave. He had dinner clothes on still and a dark double-breasted overcoat with a dwarf rose drooping in the lapel.

He sat down and held the gun on his knee for a moment before he put it away with a puzzled frown, as if he didn't know how it got into his hand.

"You're going to drive me to Berdoo," he said. "I've got to get out of town. They've put the pencil on me."

"O.K.," I said. "Tell me about it."

I sat up and felt the carpet with my toes and lit a cigarette. It was a little after five thirty.

"I jimmied your lock with a piece of celluloid," he said. "You ought to use your night latch once in a while. You read about the O'Mara disappearance of course."

"Yeah."

"Listen, anyway. If I keep talking I won't blow up. I don't think I'm spotted here."

"One drink won't hurt either of us," I said. "The Scotch is on the table there."

He poured a couple of drinks quickly and handed me one. I put on a bathrobe and slippers. The glass rattled against his teeth when he drank.

Larry put his empty glass down and held his hands tight together.

"I used to know Dud O'Mara pretty well. We used to run stuff together down from Hueneme Point. We even carried the torch for the same girl. She's married to Joe Mesarvey now. Dud married five million dollars. He married General Dade Winslow's rickety-rackety divorcee daughter."

"I know all that," I said.

"Yeah. Just listen. She picked him out of a nightclub, just like I'd pick up a cafeteria tray. But he didn't like the life. I

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guess he used to see Mona. He got wise to the hot car racket Joe Mesarvey and Lash Yeager had on the side. They knocked him off."

"The hell they did," I said. "Have another drink."

"No. Just listen. There's just two points. The night O'Mara pulled down the curtain—no, the night the papers got it—Mona Mesarvey disappeared too. Only she didn't. They hid her out in a shack a couple of miles beyond Realito. I found out. I trailed Joe there."

"What made it your business?" I asked.

"I'm still soft on her. I'm telling you this because you were pretty swell to me once. You can make something of it after I blow. They hid her out there so it would look as if Dud had blown with her. Naturally the cops were not too dumb to see Joe after the disappearance. But they didn't find Mona. They have a system on disappearances and they play the system."

He got up and went over to the window again, looked through the side of the blind.

"There's a blue sedan down there I think I've seen before," he said. "But maybe not. There's a lot like it."

He sat down again. I didn't speak.

"This place beyond Realito is on the first side road north from the Foothill Boulevard. You can't miss it. It stands all alone, a garage and a house next door. There's an old cyanide plant up above there. I'm telling you this—"

"That's point one," I said. "What was the second point?"

"The punk that used to drive for Lash Yeager lit out a couple of weeks back and went east. I lent him fifty bucks. He was broke. He told me Yeager was out at the Winslow estate the night Dud O'Mara disappeared."

I stared at him.

"It's interesting, Larry. But not enough to break eggs over. After all we do have a police department."

"Yeah. Add this. I got drunk last night and told Yeager what I knew. Then I quit the job at the Dardanella. So somebody shot at me outside where I live when I got home. I've been on the dodge ever since. Now, will you drive me to Berdoo?"

I stood up. It was May but I felt cold. Larry Batzel looked cold, even with his overcoat on.

"Absolutely," I said. "But take it easy. Later will be much safer than now. Have another drink. You don't *know* they knocked O'Mara off."

"If he found out about the hot car racket, with Mona married to Joe Mesarvey, they'd have to knock him off. He was that kind of guy."

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Larry went to the window again. "It's still there," he said over his shoulder. "You might get shot at riding with me."

"I'd hate that," I said.

"You're a good sort of heel. It's going to rain. I'd hate like hell to be buried in the rain, wouldn't you?"

"You talk too damn much," I said, and went into the bathroom.

I heard him moving around while I was shaving, but not after I got under the shower, of course. When I came out he was gone. I padded over and looked into the kitchenette. He wasn't in there.

I grabbed a bathrobe and peeked out into the hall. It was empty except for a milkman starting down the back stairs with his wire tray of bottles, and the fresh folded papers leaning against the shut doors.

"Hey," I called out to the milkman, "did a guy just come out of here and go by you?"

He looked back at me from the corner of the wall and opened his mouth to answer. He was a nice-looking boy with fine large white teeth. I remember his teeth well, because I was looking at them when I heard the shots.

They were not very near or very far. Out back of the apartment house, by the garages, or in the alley, I thought. There were two quick, hard shots and then the machine-gun. A burst of five or six, all a good gunman should ever need. Then the roar of the car going away.

The milkman shut his mouth as if a winch controlled it. His eyes were huge and empty looking at me. Then he very carefully set his bottles down on the top step and leaned against the wall.

"That sounded like shots," he said.

All this took a couple of seconds and felt like half an hour. I went back into my place and threw clothes on, grabbed odds and ends off the bureau, barged out into the hall. It was still empty, even of the milkman.

I went out down the back stairs . . . The garages were in two rows facing each other across a cement space, then two more at the end, leaving a space to go out to the alley. A couple of kids were coming over a fence three houses way.

Larry Batzel lay on his face, with his hat a yard away from his head, and one hand flung out to within a foot of a big black automatic. His ankles were crossed, as if he had spun as he fell. Blood was thick on the side of his face, on his blond hair, especially on his neck. It was also thick on the cement yard.

Two radio cops and the milk driver and a man in a brown sweater and overalls were bending over him. The man in overalls was our janitor.

I went up to them, about the same time the two kids from over the fence hit the yard. The milk driver looked at me with a queer, strained expression. One of the cops straightened up and said, "Either of you guys know him? He's still got half his face."

He wasn't talking to me. The milk driver shook his head and kept on looking at me from the corner of his eyes. The janitor

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said, " He ain't a tenant here. He might of been a visitor. Kind of early for visitors, though, ain't it? "

" He's got party clothes on. You know your place better'n I do," the cop said heavily. He got out a notebook.

The other cop straightened up too and shook his head and went towards the house, with the janitor trotting beside him.

The cop with the notebook jerked a thumb at me and said harshly, " You was here first after these two guys. Anything from you? "

I looked at the milkman. Larry Batzel wouldn't care, and a man has a living to earn. It wasn't a story for a prowl car anyway.

" I just heard the shots and came running," I said.

The cop took that for an answer. The milk driver looked up at the lowering grey sky and said nothing.

After a while I got back into my apartment and finished my dressing. When I picked my hat up off the window table by the Scotch bottle there was a small rosebud lying on a piece of scrawled paper.

The note said: *You're a good guy, but I think I'll go it alone. Give the rose to Mona, if you ever should get a chance. Larry.*

I put those things in my wallet, and braced myself with a drink.

ABOUT three o'clock that afternoon I stood in the main hallway of the Winslow place and waited for the butler to come back. I had spent most of the day not going near my office or apartment, and not meeting any homicide men. It was only a question of time, but I wanted to see General Dade Winslow first. He was hard to see.

There were a couple of statues and several suits of time-darkened armour on pedestals of dark wood. High over the huge marble fireplace hung two bullet-torn—or moth-eaten—cavalry pennants crossed in a glass case, and below them the painted likeness of a thin, spry-looking man with a black beard and moustachios and full regimentals of about the time of the Mexican War. This might be General Dade Winslow's father. The General himself, though pretty ancient, couldn't be quite that old.

Then the butler came back and said General Winslow was in the orchid house and would I follow him, please.

We went out of the french doors at the back and across the lawns to a big glass pavilion well beyond the garages. The butler opened the door into a sort of vestibule and shut it when I was inside, and it was already hot. Then he opened the inner door and it was really hot.

The air steamed. The walls and ceiling of the glasshouse dripped. In the half light enormous tropical plants spread their blooms and branches all over the place, and the smell of them was almost as overpowering as the smell of boiling alcohol.

The butler, who was old and thin and very straight and white-haired, held branches of the plants back for me to pass, and we

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came to an opening in the middle of the place. A very old man sat in a wheelchair with a travelling-rug around his body and watched us come.

Nothing lived in his face but the eyes. Black eyes, deep-set, shining, untouchable. The rest of his face was the leaden mask of death, sunken temples, a sharp nose, outward-turning ear lobes, a mouth that was a thin white slit. His hands had purple fingernails and were clasped loosely, motionless on the rug. He had a few scattered wisps of white hair on his skull.

The butler dragged a wicker chair out and I sat down. I put my hat on the floor. The butler picked it up.

"Brandy," the General said. "How do you like your brandy, sir?"

"Any way at all," I said.

He snorted. The butler went away. The General stared at me with his unblinking eyes. He snorted again.

"I always take champagne with mine," he said. "A third of a glass of brandy under the champagne, and the champagne as cold as Valley Forge. Colder, if you can get it colder."

A noise that might have been a chuckle came out of him.

"Not that I was at Valley Forge," he said. "Not quite that bad. You may smoke, sir."

I thanked him and said I was tired of smoking for a while. I got a handkerchief out and mopped my face.

"Take your coat off, sir. Dud always did. Orchids require heat—like sick old men."

I took my coat off, a raincoat I had brought along. It looked like rain. Larry Batzel had said it was going to rain.

"Dud is my son-in-law. Dudley O'Mara. I believe you had something to tell me about him."

"Just hearsay," I said. "I wouldn't want to go into it, unless I had your O.K., General Winslow."

The basilisk eyes stared at me. "You are a private detective. You want to be paid, I suppose."

"I'm in that line of business," I said. "But that doesn't mean I have to be paid for every breath I draw. It's just something I heard. You might like to pass it on yourself to the Missing Persons Bureau."

"I see," he said quietly. "A scandal of some sort."

The butler came back before I could answer. He wheeled a tea wagon in through the jungle, set it at my elbow and mixed me a brandy and soda. He went away.

I sipped the drink. "It seems there was a girl," I said. "He knew her before he knew your daughter. She's married to a racketeer now. It seems—"

"I've heard all that," he said. "I don't give a damn. What I want to know is where he is and if he's all right. If he's happy."

I stared at him pop-eyed. After a moment I said weakly, "Maybe I could find the girl, or the boys downtown could, with what I could tell them."

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He plucked at the edge of his rug and moved his head about an inch. I think he was nodding. Then he said very slowly, "Probably I'm talking too much for my health, but I want to make something clear. I'm a cripple. I have two ruined legs and half my lower belly. I don't eat much or sleep much. I'm a bore to myself and a damn nuisance to everybody else. So I miss Dud. He used to spend a lot of time with me. Why, God only knows."

"Well—" I began.

"Shut up. You're a young man to me, so I can be rude to you. Dud left without saying good-bye to me. That wasn't like him. He drove his car away one evening and nobody has heard of him since. If he got tired of my fool daughter and her brat, if he wanted some other woman, that's all right. He got a brainstorm and left without saying good-bye to me, and now he's sorry. That's why I don't hear from him. Find him and tell him I understand. That's all—unless he needs money. If he does, he can have all he wants."

His leaden cheeks almost had a pink tinge now. His black eyes were brighter, if possible. He leaned back very slowly and closed his eyes.

I drank a lot of my drink in one long swallow. I said, "Suppose he's in a jam. Say, on account of the girl's husband. This Joe Mesarvey."

He opened his eyes and winked. "Not an O'Mara," he said. "It's the other fellow would be in a jam."

"O.K. Shall I just pass on to the Bureau where I heard this girl was?"

"Certainly not. They've done nothing. Let them go on doing it. Find him yourself. I'll pay you a thousand dollars—even if you only have to walk across the street. Tell him everything is all right here. The old man's doing fine and sends his love. That's all."

I couldn't tell him. Suddenly I couldn't tell him anything Larry Batzel had told me, or what had happened to Larry, or anything about it. I finished my drink and stood up and put my coat back on.

I said, "That's too much money for the job, General Winslow. We can talk about that later. Have I your authority to represent you in my own way?"

He pressed a bell on his wheelchair. "Just tell him," he said. "I want to know he's all right and I want him to know I'm all right. That's all—unless he needs money. Now you'll have to excuse me. I'm tired."

He closed his eyes. I went back through the jungle and the butler met me at the door with my hat.

I breathed in some cool air and said, "The General wants me to see Mrs. O'Mara."

This room had a white carpet from wall to wall. Ivory drapes of immense height lay tumbled casually on the white carpet inside the many windows. The windows stared towards the dark foothills,

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and the air beyond the glass was dark too. It hadn't started to rain yet, but there was a feeling of pressure in the atmosphere.

Mrs. O'Mara was stretched out on a white chaise-longue with both her slippers off and her feet in fishnet stockings. She was tall and dark, with a sulky mouth. Handsome, but this side of beautiful.

She said, "What in the world can *I* do for you? It's all known. Too damn known. Except that I don't know you, do I?"

"Well, hardly," I said. "I'm just a private copper in a small way of business."

She reached for a glass I hadn't noticed but would have looked for in a moment, on account of her way of talking and the fact she had her slippers off. She drank languidly, flashing a ring.

"I met him in a nightclub," she said with a sharp laugh. "A very handsome bootlegger, with thick curly hair and an Irish grin. So I married him. Out of boredom. As for him, the bootlegging business was even then uncertain—if there were no other attractions."

She waited for me to say there were, but not as if she cared a lot whether I came through. I just said, "You didn't see him leave on the day he disappeared?"

"No. I seldom saw him leave, or come back. It was like that." She drank some more of her drink.

"Of course you knew about the girl."

"I'm glad I'm being properly frank to an old family detective. Yes, I knew about the girl." She curled a tendril of inky hair behind her ear.

"Did you know about her before he disappeared?" I asked politely.

"Certainly."

"How?"

"You're pretty direct, aren't you? Connections, as they say. Or didn't you know that?"

"Did you know the bunch at the Dardanella?"

"I've been there." She didn't look surprised. "In fact I practically lived there for a week. That's where I met Dudley O'Mara."

She rang a push-bell on a cord down in the swansdown cushions of the chaise-longue. A coy-looking maid came in and mixed a couple of drinks at a side table. She gave one to Mrs. O'Mara, put one down beside me. She went away again, showing a nice pair of legs under a short skirt.

Mrs. O'Mara watched the door shut and then said, "The whole thing has got Father into a mood. I wish Dud would wire or write or something."

I said slowly, "He's an old, old man, crippled, half buried already. One thin thread of interest held him to life. The thread snapped and nobody gives a damn. He tries to act as if he didn't give a damn himself. I don't call that a mood. I call that a pretty swell display of intestinal fortitude."

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"Gallant," she said, and her eyes were daggers. "But you haven't touched your drink."

"I have to go," I said. "Thanks all the same."

She held a slim, tinted hand out and I went over and touched it. The thunder burst suddenly behind the hills and she jumped. A gust of air shook the windows.

I went down a tiled staircase to the hallway and the butler appeared out of a shadow and opened the door for me.

I looked down a succession of terraces decorated with flower-beds and imported trees. At the bottom a high metal railing with gilded spearheads and a six-foot hedge inside. A sunken driveway crawled down to the main gates and a lodge inside them.

Beyond the estate the hill sloped down to the city and the old oil wells of La Brea, now partly a park, partly a deserted stretch of fenced-in wild land. Some of the wooden derricks still stood. These had made the wealth of the Winslow family and then the family had run away from them up the hill, far enough to get away from the smell of the sumps, not too far for them to look out of the front windows and see what made them rich.

I walked down brick steps between the terraced lawns. On one of them a dark-haired, pale-faced kid of ten or eleven was throwing darts at a target hung on a tree. I went along near him.

"You young O'Mara?" I asked.

He leaned against a stone bench with four darts in his hand and looked at me with cold, slaty eyes, old eyes.

"I'm Dade Winslow Trevillyan," he said grimly.

"Oh, then Dudley O'Mara's not your dad."

"Of course not." His voice was full of scorn. "Who are you?"

"I'm a detective. I'm going to find your—I mean, Mr. O'Mara."

That didn't bring us any closer. Detectives were nothing to him. The thunder was tumbling about in the hills like a bunch of elephants playing tag. I had another idea.

"Bet you can't put four out of five into the gold at thirty feet."

He livened up sharply. "With these?"

"Uh-huh."

"How much you bet?" he snapped.

"Oh, a dollar."

He ran to the target and cleaned darts off it, came back and took a stance by the bench.

"That's not thirty feet," I said.

He gave me a sour look and went a few feet behind the bench. I grinned, then I stopped grinning.

His small hand darted so swiftly I could hardly follow it. Five darts hung in the gold centre of the target in less than that made seconds.

He stared at me triumphantly.

"Gosh, you're pretty good, Master Trevillyan," I grunted, and got my dollar out.

His small hand snapped at it like a trout taking the fly. He had it out of sight like a flash.

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"That's nothing," he chuckled. "You ought to see me on our target range back of the garages. Want to go over there and bet some more?"

"Well, not today," I said. "Next time I visit here maybe. So Dud O'Mara is not your dad. If I find him anyway, will it be all right with you?"

He shrugged his thin, sharp shoulders in a maroon sweater. "Sure. But what can you do the police can't do?"

"It's a thought," I said, and left him.

I went on down the brick walk to the bottom of the lawns and along inside the hedge towards the gatehouse. I could see glimpses of the street through the hedge. When I was halfway to the lodge I saw the blue sedan outside. It was a small neat car, low-slung, very clean, lighter than a police car, but about the same size. Over beyond it I could see my roadster waiting under the pepper tree.

I stood looking at the sedan through the hedge. I could see the drift of somebody's cigarette smoke against the windscreen inside the car.

I bent over and unsheathed the 7.65 Luger I was wearing that day and stuck it nose-down inside my left sock, inside my shoe. I could walk that way, if I didn't walk too fast. I went on to the gates. They kept them locked and nobody got in without identification from the house.

A PLACE OF YOUR OWN

"It'll be snapped up tomorrow, I'm afraid."

The lodgekeeper, a big husky with a gun under his arm, came out and let me through a small postern at the side of the gates. I stood talking to him for a minute, watching the sedan.

It looked all right. There seemed to be two men in it. It was about a hundred feet along in the shadow of the high wall. It was a very narrow street, without sidewalks. I didn't have far to go to my roadster.

I walked a little stiffly across the dark pavement and got in, grabbed quickly down into a small compartment in the front part of the seat where I kept a spare gun. It was a police Colt. I slid it inside my underarm holster and started the car.

I eased the brake off and pulled away. Suddenly the

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rain let go in big splashing drops. I saw the sedan wheel away from the kerb behind me.

I started the windscreen wiper and built up to forty miles an hour in a hurry. I had gone about eight blocks when they gave me the siren. That fooled me. It was a quiet street, deadly quiet. I slowed down and pulled over the kerb. The sedan slid up beside me and I was looking at the black snout of a submachine-gun over the sill of the rear door.

Behind it a narrow face with reddened eyes, a fixed mouth. A voice above the sound of the rain and the windscreen wiper and the noise of the two motors said, " Get in here with us. Be nice, if you know what I mean."

They were not cops. It didn't matter now. I shut off the ignition, dropped my car keys on the floor and got out. The man behind the wheel of the sedan didn't look at me. The one behind kicked a door open and slid away along the seat, holding the tommy-gun nicely.

I got into the sedan.

" O.K., Louie. The frisk."

The driver came out from under his wheel and got behind me. He got the Colt from under my arm, tapped my hips and pockets, my belt line.

" Clean," he said, and got back into the front of the car.

The man with the tommy reached forward with his left hand and took my Colt from the driver, then lowered the tommy to the floor of the car and draped a brown rug over it. He leaned back in the corner again, smooth and relaxed, holding the Colt on his knee.

" O.K., Louie. Now let's ride."

We rode—idly, gently, the rain drumming on the roof and streaming down the windows on one side. We wound along curving hill streets, among estates that covered acres, whose houses were distant clusters of wet gables beyond blurred trees.

A tang of cigarette smoke floated under my nose and the red-eyed man said, " What did he tell you? "

" Little enough," I said. " That Mona blew town the night the papers got it. Old Winslow knew it already."

" He wouldn't have to dig very deep for that," Red-eyes said. " The buttons didn't. What else? "

" Fertile bit of land with it."

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"He said he'd been shot at. He wanted me to ride him out of town. At the last moment he ran off alone. I don't know why."

"Loosen up, peeper," Red-eyes said dryly. "It's your only way out."

"That's all there is," I said, and looked out of the window at the driving rain.

"You on the case for the old guy?"

"No. He's tight."

Red-eyes laughed. The gun in my shoe felt heavy and unsteady, and very far away. I said, "That might be all there is to know about O'Mara."

The man in the front seat turned his head a little and growled, "Where the hell did you say that street was?"

"Top of Beverly Glen, stupid. Mulholland Drive."

"Oh, that. Jeeze, that ain't paved worth a damn."

"We'll pave it with the peeper," Red-eyes said.

The estates thinned out and scrub oak took possession of the hillsides.

"You ain't a bad guy," Red-eyes said. "You're just tight, like the old man. Don't you get the idea? We want to know *everything* he said, so we'll know whether we got to blot you or no."

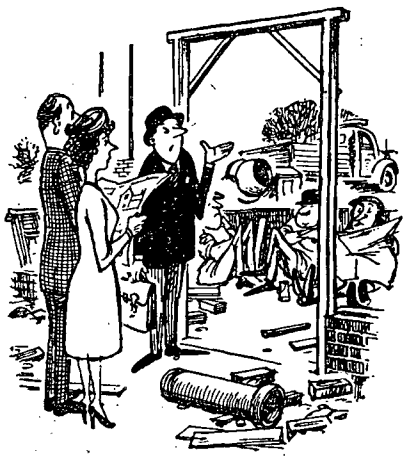
"Go to hell," I said. "You wouldn't believe me anyway."

"Try us. This is just a job to us. We just do it and pass on."

"It must be nice work," I said. "While it lasts."

Red-eyes laughed again. There seemed to be very little bluster about him.

"Far as we know you're clean with the law. Didn't make no cracks this morning."



"This is the lounge."

"That right?"

"If I say yes, you can blot me right now."

"How about some pocket money and forget the whole thing?"

"You wouldn't believe that either."

"Yeah, we would. Here's the idea. We do the job and pass on. We're an organisation. But you live here, you got goodwill and a business. You'd play ball."

"Sure," I said. "I'd play ball."

"We don't," Red-eyes said softly, "never knock off a legit. Bad for the trade."

He leaned back in the

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corner, the gun on his knee, and reached into an inner pocket. He spread a large wallet on his knee and fished two bills out of it, slid them folded along the seat. The wallet went back into his pocket.

"Yours," he said gravely. "You won't last twenty-four hours, if you slip your cable."

I picked the bills up. Two five hundreds. I tucked them in my vest. "Right," I said. "I wouldn't be a legit any more then, would I?"

"Think that over, dick."

We grinned at each other, a couple of nice lads getting along in a harsh, unfriendly world. Then Red-eyes turned his head sharply.

"O.K., Louie. Forget the Mulholland stuff. Pull up."

The car was halfway up a long bleak twist of hill. The rain drove in grey curtains down the slope. There was no ceiling, no horizon. I could see a quarter of a mile and could see nothing outside our car that lived.

The driver edged over to the side of the bank and shut off his engine. He smiled at me. He had a nice smile—like an alligator.

"We'll have a drink on it," Red-eyes said. "I wish I could make me a grand that easy. Just tyin' my nose to my chin."

"You ain't got no chin," Louie said, and went on smiling.

Red-eyes put the Colt down on the seat and drew a flat half pint out of his side pocket. It looked like good stuff, green stamp, bottled in bond. He unscrewed the top with his teeth, sniffed at the liquor and smacked his lips.

"Tilt her," he said. He reached along the seat and gave me the bottle. I could have had his wrist, but there was Louie, and I was too far from my ankle.

I breathed shallowly from the top of my lungs and held the bottle near my lips, sniffed carefully. Behind the charred smell of the bourbon there was something else, very faint, a fruity odour that would have meant nothing to me in another place. Suddenly and for no reason at all I remembered something Larry Batzel had said, something like, "East of Realito, towards the mountains, near the old cyanide plant." Cyanide. That was the word.

There was a swift tightness in my temples as I put the bottle to my mouth. I could feel my skin crawling, and the air was suddenly cold on it. I held the bottle high up and

"Well, it looks as if that's clinched the deal."

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took a long gurgling drag at it. Very hearty and relaxing. About half a teaspoonful went into my mouth and none stayed there.

I coughed sharply and lurched forward gagging. Red-eyes laughed. "Don't say you're sick from just one drink, pal."

I dropped the bottle and sagged far down in the seat, gagging violently. My legs slid way to the left, the left one underneath. I sprawled down on top of them, my arms limp. I had the gun.

I shot him under my left arm, almost without looking. He never touched the Colt except to knock it off the seat. I heard him lurch. I snapped a shot upward towards where Louie would be.

Louie wasn't there. He was down behind the front seat. He was silent. The whole car, the whole landscape was silent. Even the rain seemed for a moment to be utterly silent rain.

I still didn't have time to look at Red-eyes, but he wasn't doing anything. I dropped the Luger and yanked the tommy-gun out from under the rug. Louie hadn't made a sound.

"Listen, Louie," I said softly, "I've got the stutter-gun. How about it?"

A shot came through the seat, a shot that Louie knew wasn't going to do any good. It starred a frame of unbreakable glass. There was more silence. Louie said thickly, "I got a pineapple here. Want it?"

"Pull the pin and hold it," I said. "It will take care of both of us."

"Hell!" Louie said violently. "Is he croaked? I ain't got no pineapple."

I looked at Red-eyes then. He looked very comfortable in the corner of the seat, leaning back. He seemed to have three eyes, one of them redder even than the other two. For under-arm shooting that was something to be almost bashful about. It was too good.

"Yeah, Louie, he's croaked," I said. "How do we get together?"

I could hear his hard breathing now, and the rain had stopped being silent. "Get out of the car," he growled. "I'll blow."

"You get out, Louie. I'll blow."

"I can't walk home from here, pal."

"You won't have to, Louie. I'll send a car for you."

"I ain't done nothing. All I done was drive."

"Then reckless driving will be the charge, Louie. You can fix that—you and your organisation. Get out before I uncork this popgun."

A door latch clicked and feet thumped on the roadway. I straightened up suddenly with the gun. Louie was in the road in the rain, his hands empty and the alligator smile still on his face.

I got out past the dead man's neatly shod feet, got my Colt and the Luger off the floor, laid the heavy twelve-pound tommy-gun back on the car floor. I got handcuffs off my hip, motioned to Louie. He turned around sulkily and put his hands behind him.

"You got nothing on me," he complained. "I got protection."

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I clicked the cuffs on him and went over him for guns. He had one besides the one he had left in the car.

I dragged Red-eyes out of the car and let him arrange himself on the wet roadway. He was quite dead. Louie eyed him bitterly.

"He was a smart guy," he said. "Different. He liked tricks. Hullo, smart guy."

I got my handcuff key out and unlocked one cuff, dragged it down and locked it to the dead man's lifted wrist.

Louie's eyes got round and horrified and at last his smile went away.

"Jeeze," he whined. "Holy — ! You ain't going to leave me like this, pal?"

"Good-bye, Louie," I said. "That was a friend of mine you cut down this morning."

"Holy — !" Louie whined.

I got into the sedan and started it, drove on to a place where I could turn, drove back down the hill past him. He stood stiffly as a scorched tree, his face as white as snow, with the dead man at his feet, one linked hand reaching up to Louie's hand. There was the horror of a thousand nightmares in his eyes.

I left him there in the rain.

It was getting dark early. I left the sedan a couple of blocks from my own car, walked back to my roadster, and drove downtown.

I called the homicide detail from a phone booth, asked for a man named Grinnell, told him quickly what had happened and where to find Louie and the sedan. I told him I thought they were the thugs that machine-gunned Larry Batzel. I didn't tell him anything about Dud O'Mara.

"Nice work," Grinnell said in a queer voice. "But you better come in fast. There's a tag out for you, account of what some milk driver phoned in an hour ago."

"I'm all in," I said. "I've got to eat. Keep me off the air and I'll come in after a while."

"You better come in, boy. I'm sorry, but you better."

"Well, O.K.," I said.

I hung up and left the neighbourhood without hanging around. I had to break it now. I had to, or get broken myself.

I had a meal down near the Plaza and started for Realito.

AT about eight o'clock two yellow vapour lamps glowed high up in the rain and a dim stencil sign strung across the highway read, *Welcome to Realito.*

Frame houses on the main street, a sudden knot of stores, the lights of the corner drugstore behind fogged glass, a fly-cluster of cars in front of a tiny movie palace, and a dark bank on another corner, with a knot of men standing in front of it in the rain. That was Realito. I went on. Empty fields closed in again.

It was a smart mile, more like three, before I spotted a side road and a faint light on it, as if from behind drawn blinds in a house.

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Just at that moment my left front tyre let go with an angry hiss. That was cute. Then the right rear let go the same way.

I stopped almost exactly at the intersection. Very cute indeed. I got out, turned my raincoat up a little higher, unshipped a flash, and looked at a flock of heavy galvanised tacks with heads as big as dimes. The flat shiny butt of one blinked at me from my tyre.

Two flats and one spare. I tucked my chin down and started towards the faint light up the side road.

It was the place all right. The light came from the tilted skylight on the garage roof. Big double doors in front were shut tight, but light showed at the cracks, strong white light.

Beyond the garage a house sat back from the muddy road behind a thin clump of trees. That had light too. I saw a small buttoned-up coupé in front of the wooden porch.

The first thing was the tyres, if it could be worked, and they didn't know me. It was a wet night for walking.

I snapped the flash out and rapped on the doors with it. The light inside went out. I stood there licking rain off my upper lip, the flashlight in my left hand, my right inside my coat. I had the Luger back under my arm again.

A voice spoke through the door, and didn't sound pleased.

"What you want? Who are you?"

"Open up," I said. "I've got two flat tyres on the highway and only one spare. I need help."

"We're closed up, mister. Realito's a mile west of here."

I started to kick the door. There was swearing inside, then another, much softer voice.

"A wise guy, huh? Open up, Art."

A bolt squealed and half of the door sagged inwards. I snapped the flash again and it hit a gaunt face. Then an arm swept and knocked it out of my hand. A gun had just peeked at me from the flailing hand.

I dropped low, felt around for the flash and was still. I just didn't pull a gun.

"Kill the spot, mister. Guys get hurt that way."

The flash was burning down in the mud. I snapped it off, stood up with it. Light went on inside the garage, outlined a tall man in coveralls. He backed inwards and his gun held on me.

"Come on in and shut the door."

I did that. "Tacks all over the end of your street," I said. "I thought you wanted the business."

"Ain't you got any sense? A bank job was pulled at Realito this afternoon."

"I'm a stranger here," I said, remembering the knot of men in front of the bank in the rain.

"O.K., O.K. Well there was and the punks are hid out somewhere in the hills, they say. You stepped on their tacks, huh?"

"So it seems." I looked at the other man in the garage.

He was short, heavy-set, with cool brown eyes. He wore a belted raincoat of brown leather. His brown hat had the usual

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rakish tilt and was dry. His hands were in his pockets and he looked bored.

There was a hot sweetish smell of pyroxylin paint on the air. A big sedan over in the corner had a paint gun lying on its fender. It was a Buick, almost new. It didn't need the paint it was getting.

The man in coveralls tucked his gun out of sight through a flap in the side of his clothes. He looked at the brown man. The brown man looked at me and said gently, "Where you from, stranger?"

"Seattle," I said.

"Going west—to the big city?" He had a soft voice, soft and dry, like the rustle of well-worn leather.

"Yes. How far is it?"

"About forty miles. Seems farther in this weather. Come the long way, didn't you? By Tahoe and Lone Pine?"

"Not Tahoe," I said. "Reno and Carson City."

"Still the long way." A fleeting smile touched the brown lips.

"Take a jack and get his flats, Art."

"Now, listen, Lash—" the man in the coveralls growled, and stopped as though his throat had been cut from ear to ear.

I could have sworn that he shivered. There was dead silence. The brown man didn't move a muscle. Something looked out of his eyes, and then his eyes lowered, almost shyly. His voice was the same soft, dry rustle of sound.

"Take two jacks, Art. He's got two flats."

The gaunt man swallowed. Then he went over to a corner and put a coat on, and a cap. He grabbed up a socket wrench and a handjack and wheeled a dolly jack over to the doors.

"Back on the highway, is it?" he asked me almost tenderly.

"Yeah. You can use the spare for one spot, if you're busy."

"He's not busy," the brown man said and looked at his fingernails.

Art went out with his tools. The door shut again. I looked at the Buick. I didn't look at Lash Yeager. I knew it was Lash Yeager. There wouldn't be two men called Lash that came to that garage. I didn't look at him because I would be looking across the sprawled body of Larry Batzel, and it would show in my face. For a moment, anyway.

He glanced towards the Buick himself. "Just a panel job to start with," he drawled. "But the guy that owns it has dough and his driver needed a few bucks. You know the racket."

"Sure," I said.

The minutes passed on tiptoe. Long, sluggish minutes. Then feet crunched outside and the door was pushed open. The light hit pencils of rain and made silver wires of them. Art trundled two muddy flats in sulkily, kicked the door shut, let one of the flats fall on its side. The rain and fresh air had given him his nerve back. He looked at me savagely.

"Seattle," he snarled. "Seattle, my eye!"

The brown man lit a cigarette as if he hadn't heard. Art peeled

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his coat off and yanked my tyre up on a rim-spreader, tore it loose viciously, had the tube out and cold-patched in nothing flat. He strode scowling over to the wall near me and grabbed an air hose, let enough air into the tube to give it body, and hefted it in both hands to dip in a washtub of water.

I was a sap, but their teamwork was very good. Neither had looked at the other since Art came back with my tyres.

Art tossed the air-stiffened tube up casually, caught it with both hands wide, looked it over sourly beside the washtub of water, took one short easy step and slammed it down over my head and shoulders.

He jumped behind me in a flash, leaned his weight down on the rubber, dragged it tight against my chest and arms. I could move my hands, but I couldn't get near my gun.

The brown man brought his right hand out of his pocket and tossed a wrapped cylinder of nickels up and down on his palm as he stepped lithely across the floor.

I heaved back hard, then suddenly threw all my weight forward. Just as suddenly Art let go of the tube, and kneed me from behind.

I sprawled, but I never knew when I reached the floor. The fist with the weighted tube of nickels met me in mid-flight. Perfectly timed, perfectly weighted, and with my own weight to help it out.

I went out like a puff of dust in a draught.

IT seemed there was a woman and she was sitting beside a lamp. Light shone on my face, so I shut my eyes again and tried to look at her through my eyelashes. She was so platinumed that her head shone like a silver fruit bowl.

She wore a green travelling-dress with a mannish cut to it and a broad white collar falling over the lapels. A sharp-angled glossy bag stood at her feet. She was smoking, and a drink was tall and pale at her elbow.

I opened my eyes wider and said, "Hullo there."

Her eyes were the eyes I remembered, outside Sardi's in a second-hand Rolls-Royce. Very blue eyes, very soft and lovely. Not the eyes of a hustler around the fast money boys.

"How do you feel?" Her voice was soft and lovely too.

"Great," I said. "Except somebody built a filling station on my jaw."

"What did you expect? Orchids?"

"So you know I'm a shamus."

"You slept well. They had plenty of time to go through your pockets. They did everything but embalm you."

"Right," I said.

I could move a little, not very much. My wrists were behind my back, handcuffed. There was a little poetic justice in that. From the cuffs a cord ran to my ankles, and tied them, and then dropped down out of sight over the end of the davenport and was tied

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somewhere else. I was almost as helpless as if I had been screwed up in a coffin.

"What time is it?"

She looked sideways down at her wrist, beyond the spiral of her cigarette smoke.

"Ten-seventeen. Got a date?"

"Is this the house next the garage? Where are the boys—digging a grave?"

"They'll be back."

"Unless you have the key to these bracelets you might spare me a little of that drink."

She rose all in one piece and came over to me, with the tall amber glass in her hand. I gulped from the glass craning my neck.

"I hope they don't hurt you," she said distantly, stepping back. "I hate killing."

"And you Joe Mesarvey's wife. Shame on you. Give me some more of the hooch."

She gave me some more. Blood began to move in my stiffened body.

"I kind of like you," she said. "Even if your face does look like a collision mat."

"Make the most of it," I said. "It won't last long even this good."

She looked around swiftly and seemed to listen. One of the two doors was ajar. She looked towards that. Her face seemed pale. But the sounds were only the rain.

She sat down by the lamp again.

"Why did you come here and stick your neck out?" she asked slowly.

"I had a rose for you," I said. "From Larry Batzel."

She lifted something off the table and twirled it slowly, the dwarf rose he had left for her.

"I got it," she said quietly. "There was a note, but they didn't show me that. Was it for me?"

"No, for me. He left it on my table before he went out and got shot."

Her face fell apart like something you see in a nightmare. Her mouth and eyes were black hollows. She didn't make a sound. And after a moment her face settled back into the same calmly beautiful lines.

"They didn't tell me that either," she said softly.

"He got shot," I said carefully, "because he found out what Joe and Lash Yeager did to Dud O'Mara. Bumped him off."

That one didn't phase her at all. "Joe didn't do anything to Dud O'Mara," she said quietly. "I haven't seen Dud in two years. Joe is in Chicago. He went yesterday by plane to sell out. If the deal goes through, Lash and I are to follow him. Joe is no killer."

I stared at her.

Her eyes got haunted again. "Is Larry—is he—?"

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"He's dead," I said. "It was a professional job, with a tommy-gun. I didn't mean they did it personally."

She took hold of her lip and held it for a moment tight between her teeth. I could hear her slow, hard breathing. She jammed her cigarette in an ashtray and stood up.

"Joe didn't do it!" she stormed. "I know damn well he didn't. He—" She stopped cold, glared at me, touched her hair, then suddenly yanked it off. It was a wig. Underneath, her own hair was short like a boy's, and streaked yellow and whitish brown, with darker tints at the roots. It couldn't make her ugly.

I managed a sort of laugh. "You just came out here to moult, didn't you, Silver-Wig? And I thought they were hiding you out—so it would look as if you had skipped with Dud O'Mara."

She kept on staring at me. As if she hadn't heard a word I said. Then she strode over to a wall mirror and put the wig back on, straightened it, turned and faced me.

"Joe didn't kill anybody," she said again, in a low, tight voice. "He's a heel—but not that kind of heel. He doesn't know anything more about where Dud O'Mara went than I do. And I don't know anything."

"He just got tired of the rich lady and scrammed," I said dully.

She stood near me now, her white fingers down at her sides, shining in the lamplight. Her head above me was almost in shadow. The rain drummed and my jaw felt large and hot and the nerve along the jaw-bone ached, ached.

"Lash has the only car that was here," she said softly. "Can you walk to Realito, if I cut the ropes?"

"Sure. Then what?"

"I've never been mixed up in a murder. I won't now. I won't ever."

She went out of the room very quickly, and came back with a long kitchen knife and sawed the cord that tied my ankles, pulled it off, cut the place where it was tied to the handcuffs. She stopped once to listen, but it was just the rain again.

I rolled into a sitting position and stood up. My feet were numb, but that would pass. I could walk. I could run, if I had to.

"Lash has the key of the cuffs," she said dully.

"Let's go," I said. "Got a gun?"

"No. I'm not going. You beat it. He may be back any minute."

I went over close to her. "You're going to stay here after turning me loose? Wait for that killer? You're nuts. Come on, Silver-Wig, you're going with me."

"No."

"Suppose," I said, "he did kill O'Mara? Then he also killed Larry. It's got to be that way."

"Joe never killed anybody," she almost snarled at me.

"Well, suppose Yeager did."

"You're lying. Just to scare me. Get out. I'm not afraid of Lash Yeager. I'm his boss' wife. Get out!" she said hoarsely.

"O.K." I turned away from her and went through the door.

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She almost ran past me into the hallway and opened the front door, looked out into the black wetness. She motioned me forward.

"Good-bye," she whispered. "I hope you find Dud. I hope you find who killed Larry. But it wasn't Joe."

I stepped close to her, almost pushed her against the wall with my body.

"You're still crazy, Silver-Wig. Good-bye."

She raised her hands quickly and put them on my face. Cold hands, icy cold. She kissed me swiftly on the mouth with cold lips.

"Beat it, strong guy. I'll be seeing you some more. Maybe in heaven."

I went through the door and down the dark slithery wooden steps of the porch, across to the roadway, and back along it towards Foothill Boulevard. The rain touched my face with fingers of ice that were no colder than her fingers.

The curtained roadster stood just where I had left it, leaned over, the left front axle on the tarred shoulder of the highway. My spare and one stripped rim were thrown in the ditch.

They had probably searched it, but I still hoped. I crawled in backwards and banged my head on the steering-post and rolled over to get the manacled hands into my little secret gun pocket. They touched the barrel. It was still there.

I got it out, got myself out of the car, got hold of the gun by the right end and looked it over.

I held it tight against my back to protect it a little from the rain and started towards the house.

I was halfway there when he came back. His lights turning quickly off the highway almost caught me. I flopped into the ditch and put my nose in the mud and prayed.

The car hummed past. I heard the wet rasp of its tyres shouldering the gravel in front of the house. The engine died and lights went off. The door slammed. I didn't hear the house door shut, but I caught a feeble fringe of light through the trees as it opened.

I got up on my feet and went on. I came up beside the car, a small coupé, rather old. The gun was down at my side, pulled around my hip as far as the cuffs would let it come.

The coupé was empty. Water gurgled in the radiator. I listened and heard nothing from the house. Only the heavy bong-bong-bong of the raindrops hitting the elbows at the bottom of rain gutters.

Yeager was in the house. She had let me go and Yeager was in there with her. Probably she wouldn't tell him anything. She would just stand and look at him. She was his boss' wife. That would scare Yeager to death.

He wouldn't stay long, but he wouldn't leave her behind, alive or dead. He would be on his way and take her with him. What happened to her later on was something else.

All I had to do was wait for him to come out. I didn't do it.

I shifted the gun into my left hand and leaned down to scoop

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up some gravel. I threw it against the front window. It was a weak effort. Very little even reached the glass.

I ran back behind the coupé and got its door open and saw the keys in the ignition lock. I crouched down, holding on to the doorpost.

The house had already gone dark, but that was all. There wasn't any sound from it. No soap. Yeager was too cagey.

I reached it with my foot and found the starter, then strained back with one hand and turned the ignition key. The warm engine caught at once, throbbed gently against the pounding rain.

I got back to the ground and slid along to the rear of the car, crouched down.

The sound of the motor got him. He couldn't be left there without a car.

A darkened window slid up an inch, only some shifting of light on the glass showing it moved. Flame spouted from it, the racket of three quick shots. Glass broke in the coupé.

I screamed and let the scream die into a gurgling groan. I was getting good at that sort of thing. I let the groan die in a choked gasp. I was through, finished. He had got me. Nice shooting, Yeager. Inside the house a man laughed. Then silence again, except for the rain and the quietly throbbing engine of the coupé.

Then the house door inched open. A figure showed in it. She came out on the porch, stiffly, the white showing at her collar, the wig showing a little but not so much. I saw Yeager crouched behind her.

She started across the gravel. Her voice said slowly, without any tone at all, "I can't see a thing, Lash. The windows are all misted."

She jerked a little, as if a gun had prodded her, and came on. Yeager didn't speak. I could see him now past her shoulder, his hat, part of his face. But no kind of a shot for a man with cuffs on his wrists.

She stopped again, and her voice was suddenly horrified.

"He's behind the wheel!" she yelled. "Slumped over!"

He fell for it. He knocked her to one side and started to blast again. More glass jumped around. A bullet hit a tree on my side of the car. A cricket whined somewhere. The engine kept right on humming.

He was low, crouched against the black, his face a greyness without form that seemed to come back very slowly after the glare of the shots. His own fire had blinded him too—for a second. That was enough.

I shot him four times, straining the pulsing Colt against my ribs.

He tried to turn and the gun slipped away from his hand. He half snatched for it in the air, before both his hands suddenly went against his stomach and stayed there. He sat down on the wet gravel and his harsh panting dominated every other sound of the wet night.

I watched him lie down on his side. The panting stopped.

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It seemed like an age before Silver-Wig called out to me. Then she was beside me, grabbing my arm.

"Shut the engine off!" I yelled at her. "And get the key of these damn' irons out of his pocket."

"You d-darn fool," she babbled. "W-what did you come back for?"

CAPTAIN AL ROOF of the Missing Persons Bureau swung in his chair and looked at the sunny window. This was another day, and the rain had stopped long since.

He said gruffly, "You're making a lot of mistakes, brother. Dud O'Mara just pulled down the curtain. None of those people knocked him off. The Batzel killing had nothing to do with it. They've got Mesarvey in Chicago and he looks clean. The one you anchored to the dead guy don't even know who they were pulling the job for. Our boys asked him enough to be sure of that."

"I'll bet they did," I said. "I've been in the same bucket all night and I couldn't tell them much either."

He looked at me slowly, with large, bleak, tired eyes. "Killing Yeager was all right, I guess. In the circumstances. Besides I'm not homicide. I couldn't link any of that to O'Mara—unless you could."

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I could, but I hadn't. Not yet. "No," I said. "I guess not." I stuffed and lit my pipe. After a sleepless night it tasted bitter.

"That all that's worrying you?"

"I wondered why you didn't find the girl, at Realito. It couldn't have been very hard—for you."

"We just didn't. We should have. I admit it. Anything else?"

I blew smoke across his desk. "I'm looking for O'Mara because the General told me to. It wasn't any use my telling him you would do everything that could be done. He could afford a man with all his time on it. I suppose you resent that."

He wasn't amused. "Not at all, if he wants to waste money. The people that resent you are behind a door marked *Homicide Bureau.*"

He planted his feet with a slap and elbowed his desk.

"O'Mara had fifteen grand in his clothes. That's a lot of dough but O'Mara would be the boy to have it. So he could take it out and have his old pals see him with it. Only they wouldn't think it was fifteen grand of real dough. His wife says it was. Now with any other guy that might indicate an intention to disappear. But not O'Mara. He packed it all the time."

He bit a cigar and put a match to it. He waved a large finger. "See?"

I said I saw.

"O.K. O'Mara had fifteen grand, and a guy that pulls down the curtain can keep it down only so long as his wad lasts. Fifteen grand is a good wad. I might disappear myself, if I had that much. But after it's gone we get him. He cashes a cheque, hits a hotel or store for credit, gives a reference, writes a letter or gets one. He's in a new town and he's got a new name, but he's got the same old appetite. A guy can't have friends everywhere, and if he had, they wouldn't all stay clammed for ever. Would they?"

"No, they wouldn't," I said.

"He went far," Roof said. "But the fifteen grand was all the preparation he made. No baggage, no boat or rail or plane reservation, no taxi or private rental hack to a point out of town. That's all checked. His own car was found a dozen blocks from where he lived. But that means nothing. He knew people who would ferry him several hundred miles and keep quiet about it, even in the face of a reward. Here, but not everywhere. Not new friends."

"But you'll get him," I said.

"When he gets hungry."

"That could take a year or two. General Winslow may not live a year. That is a matter of sentiment, not whether you have an open file when you retire."

"You attend to the sentiment, brother." His eyes moved and bushy reddish eyebrows moved with them. He didn't like me. Nobody did, in the police department that day.

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"I'd like to," I said and stood up. "Maybe I'd go pretty far to attend to that sentiment."

"Sure," Roof said, suddenly thoughtful. "Well, Winslow is a big man. Anything I can do let me know."

"You could find out who had Larry Batzel gunned," I said. "Even if there isn't any connection."

"We'll do that. Glad to," he guffawed, and flicked ash all over his desk. "You just knock off the guys who can talk and we'll do the rest. We like to work that way."

"It was self-defence," I growled. "I couldn't help myself."

"Sure. Take the air, brother. I'm busy."

But his large bleak eyes twinkled at me as I went out.

THE morning was all blue and gold and the birds in the ornamental trees of the Winslow estate were crazy with song after the rain.

The lodgekeeper let me in through the postern and I walked up the driveway and along the top terrace to the huge carved Italian front door. Before I rang the bell I looked down the hill and saw the Trevillyan kid sitting on his stone bench with his head cupped in his hands, staring at nothing.

I went down the brick path to him. "No darts today, son?"

He looked up at me with his lean, slaty, sunken eyes.

"No. Did you find him?"

"Your dad? No, sonny, not yet."

He jerked his head. His nostrils flared angrily. "He's not my dad. I told you. And don't talk to me as if I was four years old. My dad he's—he's in Florida or somewhere."

"Well, I haven't found him yet, whoever's dad he is," I said.

"Who smacked your jaw?" he asked, staring at me.

"Oh, a fellow with a roll of nickels in his hand."

"Nickels?"

"Yeah. That's as good as brass knuckles. Try it sometime, but not on me," I grinned.

"You won't find him," he said bitterly, staring at my jaw. "Him, I mean. My mother's husband."

"I bet I do."

"How much you bet?"

"More money than even you've got in your pockets."

He kicked viciously at the edge of a red brick in the walk. His voice was still sulky, but more smooth. His eyes speculated.

"Want to bet on something else? C'mon over to the range. I bet you a dollar I can knock down eight out of ten pipes in ten shots."

I looked back towards the house. Nobody seemed impatient to receive me. "Well, we'll have to make it snappy. Let's go."

We went along the side of the house under the windows. The orchid glasshouse showed over the tops of some bushy trees far back. A man was polishing the chromium of a big car in front of

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the garages. We went past to a low white building against the bank.

The boy took a key out and unlocked the door and we went into close air that still held traces of cordite fumes. The boy clicked a spring lock on the door.

" Me first," he snapped.

The place looked something like a small beach shooting gallery. There was a counter with a .22 repeating rifle on it and a long, slim target pistol. Both well-oiled but dusty. About thirty feet beyond the counter was a waist-high, solid-looking partition across the building, and behind that a simple layout of clay pipes and ducks and two round white targets marked off with black rings and stained by lead bullets.

The clay pipes ran in an even line across the middle, and there was a big skylight, and a row of hooded overhead lights.

The boy pulled a cord on the wall and a thick canvas blind slid across the skylight. He turned on the hooded lights and then the place really looked like a beach shooting gallery.

He picked up the .22 rifle and loaded it quickly from a cardboard box of shells, .22 shorts.

" A dollar if I get eight out of ten pipes? "

" Blast away," I said, and put my money on the counter.

He took aim almost casually, fired too fast, showing off. He missed three pipes. It was pretty fancy shooting at that.

He threw the rifle down on the counter.

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"Gee, go set up some more. Let's not count that one. I wasn't set."

"You don't aim to lose any money, do you son? Go set 'em up yourself. It's your range."

His narrow face got angry and his voice got shrill. "You do it! I've got to relax, see. I've got to relax."

I shrugged at him, lifted a flap in the counter and went along the whitewashed side wall, squeezed past the end of the low partition. The boy clicked his reloaded rifle shut behind me.

"Put that down," I growled back at him. "Never touch a gun when there's anyone in front of you."

He put it down, looking hurt.

I bent down and grabbed a handful of clay pipes out of the sawdust in a big wooden box on the floor. I shook the yellow grains of wood off them and started to straighten up.

I stopped with my hat above the barrier, just the top of my hat. I never knew why I stopped. Blind instinct.

The .22 cracked and the lead bullet bonged into the target in front of my head. My hat stirred lazily on my head, as though a blackbird had swooped at it during the nesting season.

A nice kid. He was full of tricks, like Red-eyes. I dropped the pipes and took hold of my hat by the brim, lifted it straight up off my head a few inches. The gun cracked again. Another metallic bong on the target.

I let myself fall heavily to the wooden flooring, among the pipes.

A door opened and shut. That was all. Nothing else. The hard glare from the hooded lights beat down on me. The sun peeked in at the edges of the skylight blind. There were two bright new splashes on the nearest target, and there were four small round holes in my hat, two and two, on each side.

I crawled to the end of the barrier and peeked around it. The boy was gone. I could see the small muzzles of the two guns on the counter.

I stood up and went back along the wall, switched the lights off, turned the knob of the spring lock and went out. The Winslow chauffeur whistled at his polish job around in front of the garages.

I crushed my hat in my hand and went back along the side of the house, looking for the kid. I didn't see him. I rang the front door bell.

I asked for Mrs. O'Mara. I didn't let the butler take my hat.

She was in an oyster-white something, with white fur at the cuffs and collar and around the hem. A breakfast table on wheels was pushed to one side of her chair and she was flicking ashes among the silver. The coy-looking maid with the nice legs came and took the table out and shut the tall white door. I sat down.

Mrs. O'Mara leaned her head back against a cushion and looked tired. The line of her throat was distant, cold. She stared at me with a cool, hard look, in which there was plenty of dislike.

"You seemed rather human yesterday," she said. "But I see you are just a brute like the rest of them. Just a brutal cop."

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" I came to ask you about Lash Yeager," I said.

She didn't even pretend to be amused. " And why should you think of asking me? "

" Well—if you lived a week at the Dardanella Club—" I waved my crunched-together hat.

She looked at her cigarette fixedly. " Well, I did meet him, I believe. I remember the rather unusual name."

" They all have names like that, those animals," I said. " It seems that Larry Batzel—I guess you read in your paper about him too—was a friend of Dud O'Mara's once. I didn't tell you about him yesterday. Maybe that was a mistake."

A pulse began to throb in her throat. She said softly, " I have a suspicion you are about to become very insolent, that I may even have to have you thrown out."

" Not before I've said my piece. It seems that Mister Yeager's driver—they have drivers as well as unusual names, those animals—told Larry Batzel that Mister Yeager was out this way the night O'Mara disappeared."

The old army blood had to be good for something in her. She didn't move a muscle. She just froze solid.

I got up and took the cigarette from between her frozen fingers and killed it in a white jade ashtray. I laid my hat carefully on her white satin knee. I sat down again.

Her eyes moved after a while. They moved down and looked at the hat. Her face flushed very slowly, in two vivid patches over the cheek-bones. She fought around with her tongue and lips.

" I know," I said. " It's not much of a hat. I'm not making you a present of it. But just look at the bullet-holes in it once."

Her hand became alive and snatched at the hat. Her eyes became flames. She spread the crown out, looked at the holes, and shuddered.

" Yeager? " she asked, very faintly. It was a wisp of a voice, an old voice.

I said very slowly, " Yeager wouldn't use a .22 target rifle, Mrs. O'Mara."

The flame died in her eyes. They were pools of darkness, much emptier than darkness.

" You're his mother," I said. " What do you want to do about it? "

" Merciful God! Dade! He . . . shot at you! "

" Twice," I said.

" But why? . . . Oh, why? "

" You think I'm a wise guy, Mrs. O'Mara. Just another hard-eyed boy from the other side of the tracks. It would be easy in this spot, if I was. But I'm not that at all, really. Do I have to tell why he shot at me? "

She didn't speak. She nodded slowly. Her face was a mask now.

" I'd say he probably can't help it," I said. " He didn't want me to find his stepfather, for one thing. Then he's a little lad that likes money. That seems small, but it's part of the picture. He

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almost lost a dollar to me on his shooting. It seems small, but he lives in a small world. Most of all, of course, he's a crazy little sadist with an itchy trigger-finger."

"How dare you!" she flared. It didn't mean anything. She forgot it herself instantly.

"How dare I? I do dare. Let's not bother figuring why he shot at *me*. I'm not the first, am I? You wouldn't have known what I was talking about, you wouldn't have assumed he did it on purpose."

She didn't move or speak. I took a deep breath.

"So let's talk about why he shot Dud O'Mara," I said.

If I thought she would yell even this time, I fooled myself. The old man in the orchid house had put more into her than her tallness and her dark hair and her reckless eyes.

The lines of her cheeks sharpened and her hand went up like an artificial hand moved by wires and took hold of the white fur at her throat and pulled it tight and squeezed it until her knuckles looked like bleached bone. Then she just stared at me.

My hat slid off her knee on to the floor. The sound it made falling was one of the loudest sounds I had ever heard.

"Money," she said in a dry croak. "Of course, you want money."

"How much money do I want?"

"Fifteen thousand dollars."

I nodded, stiff-necked as a floorwalker trying to see with his back.

"That would be about right. That would be the established retainer. That would be about what he had in his pockets and what Yeager got for getting rid of him."

"You're too—damned smart," she said horribly. "I could kill you myself and like it."

I tried to grin. "That's right. Smart and without a feeling in the world. It happened something like this. The boy got O'Mara where he got me, by the same simple ruse. I don't think it was a plan. He hated his stepfather, but he wouldn't exactly plan to kill him."

"He hated him," she said.

"So they're in the little shooting gallery and O'Mara is dead on the floor, behind the barrier, out of sight. The shots, of course, meant nothing there. And very little blood, with a head shot, small calibre. So the boy goes out and locks the door and hides. But after a while he has to tell somebody. He tells you. You're the one to tell."

"Yes," she breathed. "He did just that." Her eyes had stopped hating me.

"You think about calling it an accident, which is O.K., except for one thing. The boy's not a normal boy, and you know it. The General knows it, the servants know. There must be other people that know it. And the law, dumb as you think they are, are pretty smart with subnormal types. They get to handle so many

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of them. And I think he would have talked. I think, after a while, he would even have bragged."

"Go on," she said.

"You wouldn't risk that," I said. "Not for your son and not for the sick old man in the orchid house. You'd do any awful criminal callous thing rather than risk that. You did it. You knew Yeager and you hired him to get rid of the body. That's all—except that hiding the girl, Mona Mesarvey, helped to make it look like a deliberate disappearance."

"He took him away after dark, in Dud's own car," she said hollowly.

I reached down and picked my hat off the floor. "How about the servants?"

"Norris knows. The butler. He'd die on the rack before he told."

"Yeah. Now you know why Larry Batzel was knocked off and why I was taken for a ride, don't you?"

"Blackmail," she said. "It hadn't come yet, but I was waiting for it. I would have paid anything, and he would know that."

"Bit by bit, year by year, there was a quarter of a million in it for him, easy. I don't think Joe Mesarvey was in it at all. I know the girl wasn't."

She didn't say anything. She just kept her eyes on my face.

"Why in hell," I groaned, "didn't you take the guns away from him?"

"He's worse than you think. That would have started something worse. I'm—I'm almost afraid of him myself."

"Take him away," I said. "From here. From the old man. He's young enough to be cured, by the right handling. Take him now. It would kill the General out of hand to know his blood was in that."

She got up draggingly and dragged herself across to the windows. She stood motionless, almost blending into the heavy white drapes. After a while she turned and walked past me. When she was behind me she caught her breath and sobbed just once. "It was very vile. It was the vilest thing I ever heard of. Yet I would do it again. Father would not have done it. He would have spoken right out. It would, as you say, have killed him."

"Take him away," I pounded on. "He's hiding out there now. He thinks he got me. He's hiding somewhere like an animal. Get him. He can't help it."

"I offered you money," she said, still behind me. "That's nasty. I wasn't in love with Dudley O'Mara. That's nasty too. I can't thank you. I don't know what to say."

"Forget it," I said. "I'm just an old workhorse. Put *your* work on the boy."

"I promise. Good-bye."

We didn't shake hands. I went back down the stairs and the butler was at the front door as usual. Nothing in his face but politeness.

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" You will not want to see the General today, sir? "

" Not today, Norris."

I didn't see the boy outside. I went through the postern and got into my rented Ford and drove on down the hill, past where the old oil wells were. Around some of them, not visible from the street, there were still sumps in which waste water lay and festered with a scum of oil on top.

They would be ten or twelve feet deep, maybe more. There would be dark things in them. Perhaps in one of them—

I was glad I had killed Yeager.

On the way back downtown I stopped at a bar and had a couple of drinks. They didn't do me any good.

All they did was make me think of Silver-Wig, and I never saw her again.

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Another exciting Chandler in Argosy next month

WINNER : CROSSWORD COMPETITION No.1

We are pleased to announce that the following reader has been awarded the Colibri Table Lighter, the prize in our March Competition:

Dr. John K. Adamson, Haltwhistle, Northumberland

SOLUTION TO PRIZE CROSSWORD NO. 1 (MARCH)

ACROSS. 1, *Chest.* 4, *Misshapen.* 9, *Raiment.* 10, *Upright.* 11, *Rooftrees.* 12, *Beaks.* 13, *Dredges.* 15, *Plastic.* 17, *Erudite.* 20, *Addenda.* 22, *Balsa.* 23, *Barracuda.* 25, *Croaker.* 26, *Ill sent.* 27, *Sternpost.* 28, *Poser.*

DOWN. 1, *Cartridge.* 2, *Epitome.* 3, *Treat.* 4, *Mutters.* 5, *Soursop.* 6, *Hardboard.* 7, *Pageant.* 8, *Notes.* 14, *Grimalkin.* 16, *Character.* 18, *Unloose.* 19, *Embargo.* 20, *Airlift.* 21, *Neuters.* 22, *Becks.* 24, *All up.*

PRIZE CROSSWORD COMPETITION No. 4

Argosy's Special Prize Crossword Competition is open to all readers whose entries reach us on or before the closing date, **Friday 12 June.** This month the prize, for the first correct solution to be checked on the closing date, is the **" Marlborough " Picnicmaster Set** shown overleaf. Entries should be completed in ink. If you do not wish to cut Argosy, copy your solution on to a plain sheet of paper and send it to us, not forgetting to add your name and address in capital letters. Please post your entry **in a 3d. stamped envelope to:** ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD (No. 4), 1/2 Bear Alley, Farringdon Street, London E.C.4. (Comp.) to arrive by **12 June, the closing date.** The name of the winner of the "Marlborough" Picnicmaster Set and the solution to the crossword will appear in September Argosy, on sale 7 August 1964.

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ARGOSY PRIZE CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1 Artist wins at general election (12).

8 To treat as equal (4).

9 Abuse at market (12).

10 "And I'll not —— for wine" (Jonson) (4).

13 None competed in Algeria (4).

15 Gave a fancy address ? (6).

19 Some liken it to knowledge (3).

21 Stairs leading to these flats ? (7).

22 Could mean tea is to proceed (7).

23 The first rib (3).

24 Put lace around a Veronese house (7).

25 Disc and rod broken in clash (7).

27 Has he a tail for each life ? (3).

29 Begins in verse ? (4).

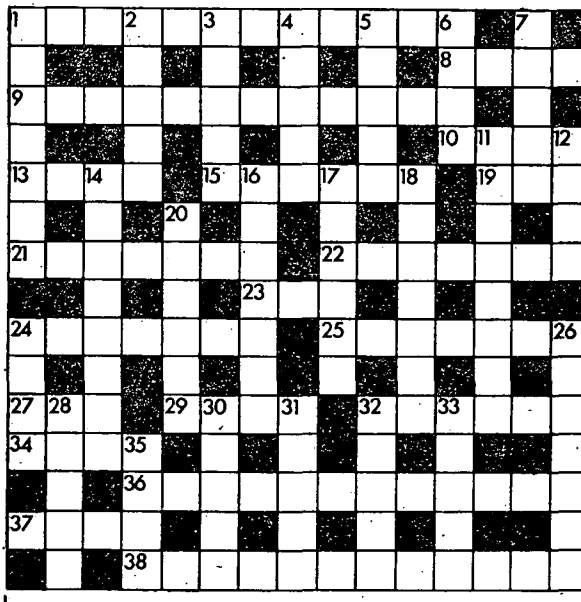
32 Cold food for a boy on board ? (6).

34 "And whipp'd the offending —— out of him" (*Henry V*) (4).

36 Are George Peele and Arnold Bennett guilty of idle fiction ? (3,5,4).

37 In the clutches of those on the run ? (4).

38 A jockey's first position ? (8-4).



SPECIAL CROSS-WORD No. 4

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

NAME.....
(Mr., Mrs., Miss)
ADDRESS.....

A.4.....

CUT ALONG THE LINE

RULES OF ENTRY ON PAGE 151

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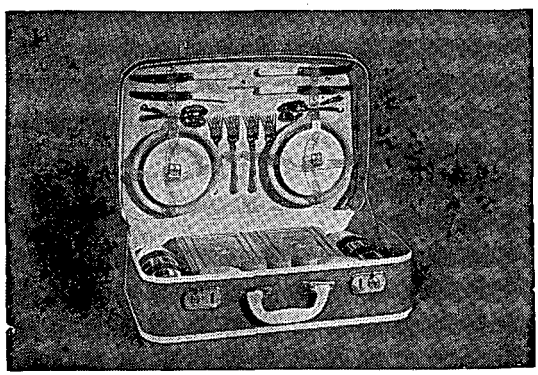
OUR CROSSWORD PRIZE



Specially designed for the summer motorist, our "Marlborough" Picnicmaster Set for four people is elaborately fitted with two 23 oz. vacuum flasks, two large plastic food boxes, three 6 oz. glass containers and four knives, forks, teaspoons, plastic cups, saucers and plates. The elegant moulded fibreboard case has a spongeable lining, brassed locks, and comes in a two-colour scheme of ivory with eau-de-nil, rose, or tan.

DOWN

1 Carver of primates ? (7).

2 Often on legs—may break into a run ! (5).

3 House with many numbers (5).

4 Car is smashed in town of Mon (5).

5 America takes time for practice (5).

6 Navy list ? (4).

7 Little dog takes nothing but tea (5).

11 What a musical state to be in ! (8).

12 Katherine was born at a joint ? (4).

14 We spot Ada looking for unclaimed literary works (8).

16 A colourful favour for fans (7).

17 Stewed in a woollen suit (6).

18 Lake found in flat expanse (4,3).

20 Popular sun god (6).

24 Bolivian shrub (4).

26 Sweet of course ! (7).

28 Maxim of the modern era (5).

30 Where is the shrew tamed ? (5).

31 Satirist to get the bird (5).

32 Inflexible tail (5).

33 Clearly drunk ? (3,2).

35 Proverbial riches ? Not for the rover (4).

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